

What Happened Between Jesus' Death and Resurrection?

Introduction

To start to answer the question about what happened to Jesus between the time He died and was resurrected, other questions need to be explored. What is the nature of the soul and/or spirit? What is hell and/or Hades? What happens to people after they die?

This thesis will explore these questions.

Theories / Teachings on the Afterlife

1. Conscious existence of souls in Hades previous to Judgment.

This view was commonly held prior to the second temple period. Everyone went down to hades after death to live a shadowy existence. Everyone experienced the same fate, and this was not something to look forward to.

2. Everyone goes to Hades and they go to either Abraham's bosom or to a place that was the opposite of paradise

This view is one of the most common views today. This view was influenced by the Greek culture in which Israel lived. It is usually defended by the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The view is that everyone goes to one of two separate places in Hades until Judgement Day. People who are saved go to paradise, people who are not go to a place of punishment.

3. Unconscious existence of souls in Hades before Judgment.

This is one side of Christian Mortalism (pejoratively referred to as Soul Sleep). Mortalism views have been held by various Jews and Christians throughout history. Some adherents were Tatian of Adiabene and Marcus Minucius Felix. See a whole discussion of the history of this at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_mortalism.

4. Annihilation of souls upon death

The soul's existence is linked to the body - God resurrects both body and soul at Judgement Day. This is another flavor of Christian Mortalism. Hades is a allegory, and not a real place.

5. Immediate placement in heaven or hell of people who die.
6. Old Testament saints reside in Abraham's Bosom until Christ's death, New Testament Christians go immediately to heaven upon death.

This would seemingly ignore Judgement Day. However, if Judgement Day happens outside of our space-time, and souls are plucked out of time and space and go directly to Judgement Day, I see nothing wrong with this view. This view stipulates that Hades (assuming there ever was one) only existed in the Old Testament. Presumably Jesus, when He arose, brought everyone out of Hades with Him.

7. Conscious existence of souls in Hell after Judgment.

This is another aspect of the most popular view. There is a transfer from Hades to Judgement Day to Heaven/Hell. This view of Hell says that people are eternally conscious and suffering in Hell through all eternity.

8. Destruction (annihilation) of souls in Hell after Judgment.

This is a view that is widely gaining popularity. It postulates that people who go to hell are immediately, or after some time, completely burned up and cease to exist. This is another aspect of Christian Mortalism.

9. Hell is a holding place until all people eventually reconciled to God.

This is the Universal Reconciliation (or Universalism) view.

10. Purgatory

Some Catholics believe in the concept of Purgatory, in which the elect are purified before final Judgement.

Bible verses concerning Souls and the Afterlife

Below is a list of every Bible verse I could find addressing that topic, followed by possible explanations - or ways of looking at the verse(s).

In the end, these Bible verses will add (or subtract) "weight" to various views (or provide alternative views).

- Genesis 1:7

7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Possible: This verse is describing the formation of both the body and soul. The soul is nothing more than the breath of life that God breathed into us. Our soul is not ours, but God's breath. When we die, this breath returns to God and we sink into oblivion.

Also possible: This verse is describing the creation of the soul within man. This soul is part of us. (There's no other information here about how long the soul exists).

- Genesis 3:19

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

* This is part of God's curse to Adam.

Most possible: God is telling Adam that he will return to the dust. He is not telling Him that his soul is going anywhere. If this was the only verse in the Bible, I would say that there is no separate soul/spirit.

Also possible: This could be literary. We still talk about returning to the dust even though the majority believes the soul is going somewhere.

- Genesis 3:22 - 23

22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

Possible: There were two trees in the center of the Garden of Eden - the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve were specifically prohibited from eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This prohibition did not include the Tree of Life. Presumably, they had been eating from it, which would result in them living forever. As soon as they were ejected from the garden, they couldn't eat from it anymore and then would die. When God said that they will die if they ate from the other tree, He knew what He was talking about - because He couldn't allow them to eat from the Tree of Life anymore.

- Genesis 37:35

All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

* Here is the first mention of Sheol.

Most possible: At this point, it just means the grave, or the dust.

Also possible: Sheol is a real place, a gathering of dead souls/spirits. For now, let's define "soul" as an incorporate part of us that exists apart from our bodies (and not make any claims yet of its existence).

- Numbers 16:32-33

32 And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. 33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

* Most possible: Sheol only means the grave (or in this case, one mass grave).

Very less possible: The people actually physically went alive to the place called Sheol, which resides someplace below the earth.

- I Samuel 28:11-15

11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me." 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." 13 The king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth." 14 He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. 15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do."

Some notes and questions concerning this account:

- Saul does not see Samuel, since he asks the woman to describe him. We may be able to presume that he does not hear Samuel speaking either, but hears the woman speaking for him.

- Why do spirits wear robes or clothing? This is especially puzzling since the woman was seeing Samuel with "spiritual" eyes instead of physical eyes. (It actually could have been grave clothing).

- The Bible forbids this practice. If we can actually talk to the dead, why would God forbid this?

Possible: The Scriptures tell us (up to this point in history) that speaking to the dead is disallowed. And here is an example of a woman bringing up Samuel. Since this is Samuel's spirit rising up to speak, then souls do exist. Furthermore, they presumably were not at his grave site. So, his soul wasn't hanging around with his body. This is indicative that Sheol is an actual place and is somewhere inside the ground (since the spirit came up from the earth).

Also possible: Saul never saw Samuel. Only the woman does. Presumably, Saul never hears Samuel either, but instead hears the woman speaking. The woman could have been a con artist (and every other medium is), or she could have been speaking with an evil spirit (demon). The woman seems to have a lot of knowledge of what Samuel would have said, so it's more probable (in this scenario) that a demon is the source of the con.

Much less possible: This is literary. This event never happened. However, this is a historical book. I think it's safe to assume that the things recorded in this book actually happened, and there's no literary embellishment.

- Job 7:21

Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be."

More possible: Job is a very literary book, and a lot of poetic license is taken by the author. No information about death, souls, etc., should be gathered here. With that, this seems to be speaking about plain death.

- Job 14:14

If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.

More possible: Although Job is a literary book, he introduces a concept of renewal. This renewal seems to be after a waiting period.

- Job 17:16

Will it go down to the bars of Sheol?

Shall we descend together into the dust?

More possible: Sheol = grave = dust.

- Psalm 6:5

For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?

More possible: Once again, the Psalms are literary, and the authors taking poetic license need to be expected. However, it's hard to get around that the author at least expects unconsciousness/annihilation in Sheol/grave.

- Psalm 16:10

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Possible: The author sees soul and body united as one, Sheol and decay as the same. The above is repeating the same thing twice.

Also possible: The author is saying that souls go to Sheol separately.

- Psalm 31:17

O Lord, let me not be put to shame,

for I call upon you;

let the wicked be put to shame;

let them go silently to Sheol.

(There is nothing in this verse that I can detect any shedding of light on the topic.)

- Psalm 39:4

“O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!

- and Psalm 39:13

Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!”

Possible: There is an emphasis here on this earthly life being where we exist, and our end here is the end.

Also possible: This is just literary lament - no information should be derived about how things work.

- Psalm 49:7-9

Truly no man can ransom another,

or give to God the price of his life,

8 for the ransom of their life is costly

and can never suffice,

9 that he should live on forever

and never see the pit.

Possible: This is just literary and can mean either the grave or Sheol. Information that Sheol is a pit should not be assumed here.

- Psalm 49:14-15

Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol;

death shall be their shepherd,
and the upright shall rule over them in the morning.

Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.

15 But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol,
for he will receive me.

More possible: So this is interesting. In today's belief, people think of Sheol as a separate place where souls go to. Yet, this describes a process where bodies (forms) will be consumed in Sheol. That means that the physical body resides in Sheol. If that is the case, Sheol is literally the hole in the ground where we are buried, and not some "other" place. In verse 15, the Psalmist is saying that God will save him from imminent death, and is not talking about some future resurrection.

Also possible: It's possible that verse 15 is speaking about resurrection.

- Psalms 68:16-18

Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mount that God desired for his abode,
yes, where the Lord will dwell forever?

17 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands;
the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary.

18 You ascended on high,
leading a host of captives in your train
and receiving gifts among men,
even among the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell there.

Most possible: These verses are celebrating the rescue of the Israelites from Egypt (with Moses). Earlier in the Psalm it mentions Mt. Sinai. The captives are those escaping Egypt, and not dead souls escaping Hades (in these verses).

- Psalm 73:26

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

More possible: Forever is literary for his whole life. Flesh and heart failing is aging.

Less possible: The psalmist is speaking about an afterlife.

- Psalm 86:13

For great is your steadfast love toward me;

you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

More possible: Literary for delivered me from death.

Less possible: Some sort of prophecy about Jesus taking souls from Sheol and bringing them to heaven. Boy, is that a stretch! I mention it, because I think people use this verse as some kind of evidence for that theory.

- Psalm 88:10-12

Do you work wonders for the dead?

Do the departed rise up to praise you?

11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?

12 Are your wonders known in the darkness,
or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Possible: People are not conscience in the grave/Sheol.

Also possible: This is literary. No alive people can hear dead people praising God.

- Psalm 89:48

What man can live and never see death?

Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?

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- Psalm 115:17

The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence.

More possible: This is just referring to the grave.

Also possible: Sheol is a real place (but there's not enough information here to say).

- Psalm 104:29-30

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30 When you send forth your Spirit,[c] they are created,

and you renew the face of the ground.

(The footnote [c] says "or breath")

More possible: Bodies decay, and their souls are at least unconscious right by the body (or souls cease to exist).

Less possible: Just being literary and just describing what happens to the body.

- Psalm 146:4

When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.

(No information can be gleaned here).

- Ecclesiastes 9:5-6

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

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- Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

Most possible: The grave is silent (and possibly people cease to exist)

Less possible: The Psalmist is just referring to living people not hearing dead people.

- Ecclesiastes 12:7

And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Note: The NET Bible puts it this way - "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the life's breath returns to God who gave it."

Possible: Our "spirit" is just a part of God's life breath, the same as when God breathed life into us in Genesis. Any reference to "soul" is really referring to God's "life breath". God's life breath is a gift to all creatures, and is taken away when we die.

Also possible: We have souls that return to God upon death. All the other verses about being unconscious are just literary references about our presence here on earth.

- Isaiah 25:8

He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

More possible: This is talking about the resurrection.

Also possible: Death refers to the enemies of Israel who threaten their lives.

- Isaiah 26:14

They are dead, they will not live;

they are shades, they will not arise;

to that end you have visited them with destruction

and wiped out all remembrance of them.

More possible: Some recognition of spirits or ghosts is given here.

Also possible: This is just literary.

- Isaiah 38:9-11

9 A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:

10 I said, In the middle of my days

I must depart;

I am consigned to the gates of Sheol

for the rest of my years.

11 I said, I shall not see the Lord,

the Lord in the land of the living;

I shall look on man no more

among the inhabitants of the world.

Possible: If Sheol was just the grave, why does it have gates specifically - so it must be a real place with a real entrance.

Also possible: This is literary. The gates of Sheol is just death. We say similar things, such as "he is at death's door", not really meaning that death actually has a physical door.

- Isaiah 38:18

For Sheol does not thank you;

death does not praise you;

those who go down to the pit do not hope

for your faithfulness.

Possible: Literary writing about death, and not some creature named Death.

- Isaiah 53: 4-5

4 Surely he has borne our griefs

and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

Possible: Everything above was accomplished in three events: - What Jesus did on the cross, - what Jesus did in the Spiritual world between when He died and when He rose, and – what Jesus did when resurrecting.

- Isaiah 53:10-11

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

More possible: It seems clearly that the usage of "soul" here is not how we normally think of it. In this case, soul is the entire man.

Much less possible: Isaiah is attempting to explain what's happening on the spiritual side of things.

- Ezekiel 18:4

Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

More possible: Soul, in this case, is just describing a man.

- Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Most possible: So, here is a clear separation of soul and body, with the soul outliving the body.

Also possible: When man kills, the body and soul is killed. However, this does not affect God's Resurrection at the End. It is at that time, God will decide whether we live or die.

Also possible: Both soul and body will be destroyed in hell. Destroyed does not mean living forever in torment.

Much less possible: Destroyed means "ruined". People who go to hell are utterly ruined but will continue to exist forever.

- Matthew 11:23

23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Most possible: Hades can be either the grave or a place. No assumption should be made here about Hades.

- Matthew 12:40

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Most possible: We really don't know whether Jesus is referring to the grave, or Hades the place.

- Matthew 16:18

18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

*The correct translation (according to the footnotes) is "gates of Hades".

Likely: This is just an idiom used to describe the enemies of God's kingdom.

Also probable: The gates of Hades means the power of death. The church will prevail even when its members die (because they will be raised again).

Less probable: Hades is Satan's headquarters (at least the part that is not set apart as Abraham's bosom). From there he directs his minions to attack the church.

- Matthew 25:41,46

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Most probable: This almost certainly refers to the final hell, or lake of fire.

More likely - Eternal fire / punishment is used in the same context as Jude 1:7 - "just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,[d] serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire." It's obvious that Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning today, but that their eternal punishment was fire that destroyed them eternally. This is "conditional-ism" or "annihilation-ism", in which people don't live forever in hell, but are destroyed. Conditional-ism states that we are not innately immortal.

Annihilation-ism states that man separated from God, the source of life, cannot live. The two concepts are different from each other, but in many cases, people who believe one believe the other.

Less probable: By eternal punishment in eternal fire, it means that the burning will take forever, and Satan, his angels and the goats will never complete their burning. The verses in Jude should not be confused with this one. (This is the eternal punishment theory that most evangelicals have been taught).

- Mark 15:33-34

33 And when the sixth hour[f] had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.[g]
34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

*Jesus is quoting Psalm 22, which does a good job describing Jesus' crucifixion. It must have been shocking to most Jewish people, who knew that Psalm well.

Possible: Jesus is using this to remind people what's going on and using it to cry out to God in His anguish. It does not mean that God actually forsook Jesus there (at least at that time). There is no verse in the Bible that God turned His face away from Jesus. On the contrary, Jesus was a pleasing sacrifice - the ultimate sacrifice that is described all through the Old Testament. God did not turn His face on the pure sacrifices of the Old Testament. Quite the contrary, they were pure and pleased God. Jesus is the ultimate pure sacrifice, and it ultimately pleased God.

Less possible: God removed His presence from Jesus, and that was the true anguish that Jesus experienced. When Jesus took our sin upon Himself, God had to turn away.

- Luke 2:29

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

Most probable: This is just talking about dying, or departing the earth.

- Luke 8:30-31

30 Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. 31 And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.

*There is some confusion to what exactly the abyss is. This is the same Abyss that Revelation uses to describe where the false prophet and one of the plagues come from.

Possible: The abyss is the realm of demons, separate from Hades, under Satan's control (this is where the gates of hell are).

Also possible: The abyss is a prison for demons, separate from Hades, under God's control.

Also possible: The abyss is part of Hades. There are several permutations of this, including all people are asleep in Hades, or all people are awake either in Abraham's bosom or being tormented possibly in the Abyss (Abaddon).

Also possible: Hades doesn't exist at all. People don't "exist" anywhere after death. We have gotten Hades, the grave, mixed with the Abyss, which is where demons are imprisoned.

Also possible: The demons are being dramatic and basically asking Jesus not to send them out of the country. The Abyss doesn't physically exist.

- Luke 10:13-15

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more

bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

Probable: Hades is just the grave.

Also probable: Hades is a real place.

- Luke 16:22-31

22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.[f] The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Possible: Jesus is using / expanding a folk tale to make a point. Everyone listening knew it was a folk tale. We should rarely determine how things really work based on the background story of a parable, but just focus on the main point. Why would we take the details of this story as literal fact? We don't do it with other parables of Jesus. In the parable of the sower, we don't attempt to figure out how the birds came and ate the seeds. For the parable of the lost sheep, we don't assume a Jewish cultural practice of abandoning flocks of sheep to look for one. We know that these are just parables.

Also possible: Jesus is actually describing how things really work. In this case, He is describing two sides of Hades, in which people are either tormented or are in paradise.

If Jesus is describing how things work, there are some strange questions that arise. Can you really pass items across the chasm? Can you speak to people across the chasm? On the other hand, why would Jesus use a folk tale with details that just aren't true? Because that was what the audience believed at the time, and Jesus was using what they believed to make a point. You can see examples of this throughout the Bible. God isn't usually concerned about inaccurate views on both science and the spiritual world that ancient people have (as well as not being concerned by a lot of wacky views we "moderns" hold). It's even possible that Jesus was even making fun of their beliefs.

- Luke 20:35-36

35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36 For they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Most probable: The resurrection of the dead will happen in "that age", when Jesus returns (as opposed to pre-millennial views of waves of resurrections).

- Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Possible: Jesus is telling the criminal that because of his belief and accompanying action today, he will join Jesus in paradise at the resurrection. It is not saying that the criminal will join Jesus today.

Also possible: In the earliest manuscripts, there was not the same type of punctuation (if any) that we use in English. It's very possible that a translator put in a comma where it didn't belong. So the sentence could very well read, "Truly, I say to you today, you . . .".

Also possible: Jesus is telling the thief that he will join Jesus in the paradise side of Hades (Abraham's bosom).

Also possible: The thief's next conscious thought (far in the future) will be in paradise with Jesus.

Also possible: As soon as Jesus dies, everyone in Hades is taken, out of space and time, directly to Judgement Day. A potential problem with this is John 20:10, in which Jesus says, "17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.''''". This is after Jesus has risen. He is saying He has not joined the Father in heaven yet. Therefore, the thief could not be with Him in heaven that day, but only if you attempt to put the time factor into play. If it is true that when Jesus arose, Hades was taken out of this space-time, then one cannot think of timelines. If Jesus also left this space-time continuum, when He ascended, then everything can be reconciled.

- Luke 23:46

46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

More possible: Jesus is quoting from Psalm 31 (just like He was quoting from Psalm 22 before). The Jews understand know this Psalm well, and this helps them believe that He is the Messiah. We shouldn't derive anything about the nature of spirits and souls from this verse.

Less possible: Jesus' spirit is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is separating Himself from Jesus and remaining with God. (What then does it mean when the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus at His baptism? Did Jesus not have His own spirit before that?)

Also less possible: We misunderstand what the spirit is. It's merely the breath of life that God breathed into us at creation.

Also less possible: Jesus has a "human" spirit, which is the temporal part of Him and is apart from God. This human "spirit" goes somewhere after we die. (Is this also our soul?)

- John 3:13

No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

Possible: Jesus is speaking of His future ascension.

Also possible: Jesus is saying that He had been in heaven before.

- John 3:16-17

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Most possible: We will all die on this earth, so those that do not believe will at some point perish. Only believers will have eternal life.

More possible: Perish means cease to exist (as opposed to suffering in Hell forever). This does not say what will happen up to the point of Judgement (whether our souls are conscious in Hades or not).

Less possible: Perish means living outside the presence of God (who is life). In Hell, perishing takes forever.

- John 5:24-26

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

More possible: We who believe will live eternally with God. This is opposed to those who will not have eternal life, but perish and be destroyed in Hell.

Less possible: By eternal life, Jesus means life with Him. Those who do not believe will not have life with Him, but be separated from Him (and remain conscience).

- John 6:40

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Possible: The soul is either non-existent or unconscious (in Hades, wherever that is), and won't be raised up until the Day of Judgement.

Also possible: By raise us up, Jesus means that He will raise up our bodies and reconnect our souls to it. Our souls are conscious in Hades (Abraham's Bosom).

Also possible: By "last day", Jesus means His resurrection. When Jesus rises, He will raise everyone else who believed on Him (bringing them out of this space-time continuum – see note on Luke 23:39-43). Believers are ushered into His presence immediately upon death.

- John 11:11-14

After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his

death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,

More possible: Jesus is alluding to the coming resurrection and is not attempting to describe the state of Lazarus' soul.

Less possible: Jesus is saying that Lazarus is still conscious somewhere, and thus all people's souls never really die. This brings up the question, if Lazarus is in a paradise, why would Jesus be so cruel as to bring him back to this life?

- John 11:25-26

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Possible: Jesus is referring to life after the resurrection. We will all certainly die.

Also possible: Jesus is actually saying that believers will never die. They will retain consciousness immediately after death and be with Him.

- John 14:1-4

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."

Most possible: This is generally speaking of us being with Jesus someday. No information can be derived upon when that will happen.

Possible: However, Jesus is going to prepare a place in His Father's house and someday bring us there. Therefore, there is a heaven somewhere out there. (This is opposed to the theory that there is no heaven, but that after the Resurrection, we will live with Jesus here on the renewed earth).

- John 19:30

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Possible: Jesus finished everything He had to do (including dying right then) for our salvation at that moment. Everything was completed on the cross. Jesus did nothing else in between His death and resurrection. This would then say nothing about Jesus "state of being" between His death and resurrection.

Also possible: Jesus finished everything He had to do on earth. There was no going back on His decision to go through with it. However, He had more to do after His death (and here there is a lot of speculation on what that was and whether He went to Hell, the bad side of Hades, or the paradise side of Hades).

- Acts 2:24

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Possible: By "loosing the pangs of death", the author is describing death as a state of conscious being. There are no pangs if He didn't exist or was unconscious.

Also possible: "loosing the pangs of death" is either literary or is a literary reference, and shouldn't be used to describe any supposed state of being.

- Acts 2:27

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.

This is quoting Psalm 16:10 - "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption."

Possible: Hades is the grave (and not some other place). Corruption is bodily decay. The word "soul" is talking about the whole being that has died. The body and soul are inseparable.

Also possible: Hades is some other place. Using the word "soul" tells us that it is different from the body.

- Acts 2:29-35

29 "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

until I make your enemies your footstool."

More possible: OK! Peter is speaking after the resurrection of Jesus. We can see that David did not ascend into heaven. Therefore, people do not go to heaven after they die (until Judgement Day). In fact, no one is resurrected (into their glorified body) until Judgement Day (except Jesus). (There are several examples of people who have been raised from the dead here on earth).

Less possible: Peter is saying David did not ascend into heaven when he died. He is in heaven now, but only after Jesus ascended first.

- Acts 7:59-60

And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The words, "fell asleep" are also used in Acts 13:36 (see below) in the context of David.

Possible: Jesus receives our spirits right after we die. Therefore our spirits go somewhere else where God keeps them. The use of the words "fell asleep" give this added emphasis.

Also possible: Stephen's spirit is the same as described in Genesis, when God breathed life into men. This simply describes that breath in Stephen ceasing to exist (what God gave He is now going to take away). The words, "falling asleep" just refer to non-existence until the body and soul are resurrected at the end of the age.

- Acts 13:29-37

29 And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“You are my Son,

today I have begotten you.’

34 And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’

35 Therefore he says also in another psalm,

“You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’

36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, 37 but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Note: God raised Jesus from the dead. It does not say that Jesus raised Himself. Corruption and "falling asleep" are concepts handled previously.

- Romans 2:5-7

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

Note: This does not describe what God's wrath is. No assumptions should be made in this context.

Possible: God grants eternal life to believers - which means that we don't already have eternal life. This means that the soul is not immortal as many believe.

Less possible: Granting immortality means partaking in God's life in heaven. Souls under God's wrath will still exist forever, but will not be partaking of God's life and cannot be considered "immortal".

- Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Possible: This is referring to physical death. Adam and Eve, presumably, were eating from the Tree of Life (since they were not barred from doing so). When they sinned, they were cast out of the Garden to face physical death. Physical death is the result of sin.

Somewhat possible: This could shed some light on what is meant by death in many other places in the Bible. Death, in this context, means being under sin and the wrath of God, and does not mean physical death and destruction. So when other places in the Bible talk about the wages of sin being death and/or destruction, we need to think of it in the same way it is used here, and not think of it as physical death.

- Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Possible: The wages of sin is eventual death (or oblivion) of both the soul and body, not eternal torture in hell. God grants us the free gift of eternal life. Eternal life, or immortality is the gift of God. Our souls are not immortal without it. "Passing from death to life" means that we are granted the gift of immortality when we believe.

Also possible: You can think of death, as it is used here, as separation from God. God is life. Living apart from God is spiritual death. When we believe, we pass from death to life. We are alive physically, but are spiritually dead. When we believe, we are born again (John 3:6), and our spiritual lives start. When we interpret Bible verses on life and death, it is important to keep this distinction in mind - physical life vs spiritual life.

- Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Possible: Dying means that you will not be granted immortality at the Judgement Day. Putting to death the deeds of the body means to make them extinct.

Also possible: Dying means spiritual death, even while we live in the body. As we live in the flesh, our life in Christ dies. As we put to death our sin nature, our life in Christ comes alive. Life and death throughout the New Testament is speaking of this life in Christ, the author of true life. Death is being separated from that, even as we think of ourselves as alive here on earth.

- Romans 10:6-7

6 But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

Possible: Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 30 (verse 6). The point was that the Law was not difficult to understand. Paul is expanding on this point saying that we can't judge people by their works - it all is based on faith in Christ.

- Romans 14:8

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Note: This is saying that while we live, we are bonded to God, and even death will not break this bond. It is unclear whether we are active between death and the Resurrection (or are unconscious or non-existent until then).

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope[b] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Possible: We are raised at the Resurrection and are not conscious (or even exist) until then.

Also possible: Fallen asleep means death in this life. The term is used to describe death on this earth. You cannot use this to say that people are not conscious after death. Although, it seems pretty clear that people aren't Resurrected as soon as they die (because that will take place at the Resurrection).

- 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Most possible: This seems to describe how things work pretty well. Notice verse 22: so also in Christ shall all be made alive (future tense). And verse 23: Resurrection in this order: First Christ, then at His coming, those who belong to Christ, then comes the end.

Possible: We can also read into this that only those who belong to Christ will be resurrected. Those who don't believe stand for judgement, but are not "resurrected". This could mean that they won't receive eternal life, but be temporarily brought to life to be judged and then annihilated.

Also possible: Once again, "Resurrection" refers to living with Christ. Separation from Christ is separation from Life, and does not necessarily mean annihilation.

Also possible: Believers don't experience "resurrection" as soon as they die. However, they are taken out of time and space, so no time elapses for them before facing Judgement Day.

- 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ...

Most possible: The trumpet refers to the trumpet that sounds at Jesus' final coming. At that moment the dead will be raised/resurrected.

Possible: It is only at that moment that we become immortal. No part of us is immortal until then. Saying that our souls are immortal now is false.

Less possible: The verses mention the mortal body and not the soul. Our bodies will rise and our souls will rejoin them, together becoming immortal.

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on[a] we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Note: The tent is our mortal existence here on earth - including both our bodies and our earthly environment. Our building from God includes our resurrected bodies and our heavenly environment.

Note #2: This does not state when we will be home with the Lord. Is there an intermediate state? Does Hades exist in New Testament times? Or are we taken out of space and time on our deaths to face Judgement?

Possible: This is speaking in general. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead at the end times in which we will be with the Lord - when everything will be made new.

- 2 Corinthians 12:2-4

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into

paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

Possible: The third heaven refers to the realm of God. There were three heavens described/understood at that time: 1. The sky, 2. Outer space, and 3. The realm where God's throne resides. Here, Paul is acknowledging the possibility that we may have something like souls or spirits that can exist outside of the body - but that he doesn't know (in this case at least).

- Philippians 1:21-23

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Possible: As soon as we die, we will be with Jesus - somewhere.

Also possible: Paul is writing this from prison, and is not very comfortable at all. To die, knowing that His next conscious moment (at the Resurrection) will be with Jesus is the gain he is referring to.

- Ephesians 2:1-2

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

Possible: Dead refers to the future of unbelievers (mortal beings destined to die), while alive means those who are granted (future) immortality.

Also possible: Dead means spiritually dead - without the life of God in us. Unbelievers have not passed from death to life. Unbelievers cannot produce fruit.

- Ephesians 2:4-7

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Possible: Raised up to the heavenly places refers to our position. We have a place with Him in heaven.

Also possible: Raised up with Him means that we have been granted the gift of (future) immortality.

Also possible: We are given the gift of life as soon as we believe. We are joined with Christ and have life in Him. We can now produce fruit.

Less possible: Death as described here describes death in the other places in the New Testament. Life is defined as being joined with the Author of Life. Death is defined as the state that we are in when separated from God (and not death of the body). When you look at life and death in this way, it changes the meaning of many of the New Testament verses and begins to describe the paradigm that the soul survives (and is separate from) the body, and yet can be independently alive from the body.

- Ephesians 2:17-18

17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Most possible: This refers to Israel and Gentiles.

- Ephesians 4:8-10

8 Therefore it says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men." [a]

9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [b] 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Note: Verse 8 is a reference to Psalm 68, which is celebrating the moving of the ark of the covenant.

Possible: Jesus died and descended to the grave (which is what Hades is). He arose and (after 40 days) went to heaven, being the first. Someday, the dead "in Him" will join Him at the Resurrection, following Him in His ascension.

Also possible: Jesus descended into Hades, which is a separate and real place. He freed all the Old Testament saints from Hades (or a portion of Hades?). However, they are not yet in Heaven because they are yet to be Resurrected at the End Times.

Also possible: Jesus took everyone from Hades, out of space and time, and brought them directly to Judgement Day.

- Colossians 2:13-14

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Note: Paul is using a word picture, saying that Jesus nailed our sins to the cross. This should not be used as evidence that all His work was done on the cross (whether or not that is the case).

- Colossians 3:1-4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Note: When Jesus comes back, we will be glorified. The concept of "above" is speaking of Christ's kingdom and His dwelling place. Any sort of physical direction should not be assumed here.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Note: The dead in Christ will rise at the trumpet of God, when Jesus comes back.

Possible: Asleep is a word picture and should not be assumed that souls are alive and asleep somewhere.

Also possible: Paul uses the word asleep, because the soul is still alive (and conscious) somewhere.

Also possible: Paul is addressing an apparent concern about people who have died missing out on Jesus' glorious coming. If it were true that people were already with Jesus, Paul would have said so. But instead, he says that the dead (in Christ) will rise first with those who are still alive. This means that dead believers are not with Jesus in heaven, or in an intermediate state. This means that if dead believers are conscious, they are not "with" Jesus. Otherwise, they are unconscious or non-existent.

- 2 Thessalonians 1:9

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

More possible: Eternal destruction means just that - they will be destroyed forever - annihilated.

Less possible: The process of destruction will take forever. Eternal separation from God is destruction.

- 1 Timothy 6:12-16

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

More possible: Eternal life is something granted by God. God alone is immortal and can grant immortality to anyone He chooses to. Everyone else is mortal (both body and soul). Therefore, those who are not gifted with immortality will cease to exist.

Less possible: Even though we are all immortal, Life only happens when we are in the presence of the Author of Life. When we are apart from Him, we have no life. Therefore, our existence will continue forever with or without Him. Immortality is wrapped up with being in the presence of God.

- Hebrews 2:14

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

More possible: Jesus only destroyed the power of death by dying. He had to actually die on the cross (in addition to the suffering He underwent). Redemption happens with Jesus' suffering and death.

Not possible: Jesus suffered so much that He couldn't survive it. It's His suffering itself that redeemed us. His death was the end to that suffering. His death itself was not part of our redemption. Everything was done on the cross.

- Hebrews 9:27

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

Possible: We will die and then be judged. This is saying that after death, there is no other chance to become saved (via time in Hades).

- Hebrews 12:22-23

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

Possible: This is describing our future.

Also possible: This is describing the spiritual condition we are in right now.

- 1 Peter 3:18-22

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which[c] he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Footnote C says, "but made alive in the Spirit, in whom he went and . . .".

More possible: See Deuteronomy 32:8 (for more information, look up Dr. Mike Heiser – Deuteronomy 32 world view). The spirits that Jesus proclaimed His final victory to were the spirits of the Elohim (or Watchers – I may be conflating terms) that rebelled in the days of Noah. Jesus/God owned Israel, and now Jesus was taking back all the rest of the nations.

Note: This whole theme started with I Peter 1:10-12 - "10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

Also possible: This is not saying that Jesus went around preaching to spirits after His death and before His resurrection. Rather it's describing that Jesus' death is a proclamation to all who are without His Salvation. Furthermore, this preaching occurred even in Noah's day - Noah proclaiming God's truth while building the ark.

Less possible: The spirits in prison actually refer to living, bodiless souls in Hades. Jesus went there to proclaim His message to those who have not heard. The apparent violation of this and the verse that says we die once and then are judged is not a violation at all.

Also less possible: The spirits in prison refer to living, conscious souls in Hades. Jesus went there to proclaim His victory in Hades, but it doesn't affect anyone's eventual fate, because there is no chance of repentance after one dies. There is some other reason Jesus proclaimed this to the spirits in Hades, since it doesn't affect their fate.

- 1 Peter 4:6

6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

More possible: This is a continuation of the theme that Christ's message was preached from the beginning (well before His Incarnation) beginning with I Peter 1:10-12.

Less possible: When Jesus died, He went and preached the gospel to the dead in Hades. Some of them were saved then. The apparent violation with the verse that says we die once and are then judged is not a violation, but our misunderstanding.

- 2 Peter 2:4

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

Note: Hell here is actually translated Tartarus (and this is the only place Tartarus is mentioned in the Bible). The Greeks knew this as the place of suffering for the wicked. It is probably a part of Hades, but may be a different place than Hades.

Possible: Tartarus is a real place, but only as a prison for the spirits of the Elohim (see notes on 1 Peter 3:18-22). Humans are mortals and only go to the grave (Hades, which is not another place) when they die.

Also possible: Tartarus is an actual place of torment. When the wicked die, they go there. (Saved souls go to Abraham's bosom). At some point, the wicked and the saved will be resurrected, face final judgement, and either join God in Heaven or be thrown into the Lake of Fire with Tartarus.

Less possible: Tartarus is not a real place. The demons were cast out of God's presence. God is the source of all light. Being cast out of His presence robs you of light, which is why the demons were thrown out into gloomy darkness.

- 1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Speculative note: If we have the ability (given to us by God) to walk in the light where He is, there must also be a place of darkness (where He isn't). Although, God is omni-present, He chooses to remove His presence from certain places so that those separated from Him can remain separated. Perhaps, Tartarus, or the place of darkness is not a real place, but a state of being.

- 1 John 3:15

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Possible: The Holy Spirit is the one who lives in us (or doesn't). The Holy Spirit is the deposit of the promise of eternal life to come (we don't have it yet because we will die). That's why it speaks of eternal life living in us.

Also possible: We are granted eternal life at the moment we believe. This means that we never really die, but are taken out of this space-time continuum and transformed the moment we pass from this earth.

- Jude 1:6-7

6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Note: Two points to address here: 1. Darkness and chains, and 2. Punishment of eternal fire. Number one will have been addressed by 2 Peter 2:4 above (and seems to shed more light on the rebellious Elohim in charge of the nations).

Note #2: As for punishment by eternal fire, it is obvious that the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah has long gone out - yet this is the punishment of eternal fire. It seems obvious that the terms eternal fire is not descriptive of the duration of the fire, but of its effect. The fire destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah completely and forever - thus eternally.

Most possible: Any other place we see the concept of eternal fire, or eternal punishment, we should interpret it with the meaning here, and not with our cultural mindset of what eternal means. That means that eternal punishment (such as Hell) does not describe duration, but effect.

Less possible: This is a special case. We can still interpret eternal punishment used in other places as one that lasts forever in duration.

- Revelation 1:18

And the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Possible: Jesus has broken death. He will resurrect us someday and grant us eternal life (or has granted us eternal life).

Less possible: Here, a distinction is made between Death and Hades, which means that Hades is a separate place.

- Revelation 2:11

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

Possible: The second death is just that - Death, destruction, annihilation.

Also possible: The second death is separation from God (God being the source of life). However, death is conscious.

- Revelation 9:1-2,11

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. 2 He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

11 They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

Possible: Revelation is apocalyptic literature. It describes things symbolically. There is no shaft of the bottomless pit, and there will be no literal smoke that will darken the sun. Apollyon may be a real demon (or one of the rebellious Elohim), or may be an event or attitude.

Also possible: There is at least some elements of physical happenstance to these visions. The Bottomless Pit is a physical place where demons were cast. Apollyon is the ruler there. The smoke is going to be physical smoke that will actually darken the sun.

- Revelation 14:13

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Possible: Die in the Lord just refers to believers who die. Nothing further should be read into that phrase. See Revelations 20:4-6 for why they are blessed.

Less possible: The phrase "dying in the Lord" can indicate that the death of believers differs from the death of unbelievers. Furthermore, the believers that die "now" are further differentiated.

- Revelation 19:20

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

Possible: They are thrown in alive and burned up (destroyed). (Does this indicate that normal unbelievers will be thrown in dead?)

Also possible: They will continue to live in the Lake of Fire.

- Revelation 20:4-6

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of

God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Possible: The souls are not conscious (and could very well be non-existent). They come to life (are resurrected) to reign with Christ for a thousand years. No one else comes to life until Judgement Day after the thousand years are over.

Also possible: Seeing the souls before they were resurrected shows that souls are entities separate from the body and stored somewhere. They could be conscious somewhere in Hades (Abraham's bosom).

Also possible: When Jesus was resurrected, all believers who were dead came to life and are now reigning with him (during the figurative thousand years, which started at Jesus' Resurrection and will end when Jesus comes back). This explains how believers now are in "heaven" with Christ.

Also Possible: There will be a tribulation period that is yet to come, followed by a Millennium. Dead believers will come to life for the Millennium. Dead unbelievers will be resurrected for Judgement Day.

- Revelation 20:7-10

7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Possible: Forever and ever is not referring to a duration in time, but to the end result (see Jude 1:6-7).

Also possible: Only the devil, the beast and the false prophet will take forever to burn. Normal unbelievers will burn and become non-existent in a finite period of time.

Also possible: All unbelievers will be tormented forever and ever. When other portions of the Bible refer to unbelievers being destroyed, it means being tormented forever and ever.

Also possible: This is describing a future event, Armageddon, in which satan and the beast will finally be destroyed.

- Revelation 20:12-15

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Possible: This is literary and shouldn't be used to glean information about where the dead reside.

Also possible: This is just referring to people who drowned at sea and who are buried. Hades is just the grave.

Also possible: Sea is literary for where believer's souls are kept, and Hades the place where unbelievers souls are kept. Hades is a separate place.

Also possible: Death is thrown into the Lake of Fire and destroyed. No one will die after this. Death and Hades, in this context are the same thing.

Also Possible: When unbelievers are thrown into the Lake of Fire, they experience the second and final death. Their consciousness and their beings will be annihilated.

Maybe possible: The second death refers to an existence separated from God.

Revelation 21:8

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

See previous.

Summary:

What is a soul?

It's clear that Christian thought has been deeply corrupted by Greek thinking (such as the Hellenistic religion). It is there that we picked up the cartoon world ideas of heaven, hell, souls, etc. You can see this influence in many modern Christian authors/bloggers, who attempt to overlay this world view onto the Bible. A little open-minded examination of the Bible reveals several possibilities.

What are "souls" or spirits? There is some evidence that souls/spirits lose consciousness upon death. Furthermore, some make a case that souls are linked to the body and have no afterlife apart from the body (in other words, they cease to exist upon death). Although, the case of Saul, dead Samuel, and the witch of Endor seems to break this view.

People with the "souls are limited to life" view look to Genesis 2:7 for the definition of the soul - "7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.". They believe that the soul is the life force (for lack of a better term) that God breathed into us. Upon death, that life force expires and/or returns to God.

The main argument for the existence of souls apart from the body seems to be in two areas:

a. Speaking with the dead. There are Old Testament laws against speaking with the dead, and there is a specific example of the Witch of Endor bringing up Samuel to speak with Saul (I Samuel 28:11-15). If people actually speak to dead people, then dead souls can be woken and communicated with - which would indicate that the dead leave behind "shades". However, an argument can be made that these shades are not the souls of dead humans at all, but evil spirits masquerading as human souls. There was

an ancient practice of communicating (and worshipping, in some cases) the "dead". It's very possible that God was prohibiting this custom, without explaining what was going on in the background.

I question why the Bible would relate this story and not specify that Samuel was in fact an evil spirit? It seems to do the opposite. On the other hand, there are very few other verses (if any) dealing with conscious souls after death. All the verses speaking about life after death (not including earthly resurrections back into human bodies, such as Lazarus) concern the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day. If souls had some kind of existence before the Resurrection, why doesn't the Bible make specific mention of it? (You cannot include the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus as a mention).

b. Matthew 10:28: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell". If the soul dies upon death, why do people not have the power to kill the soul? It's possible to think that this is distinguishing between the first and second deaths - the first death being here on earth and the second death taking place after Judgement. Men have the power to cause the first death, but only God has the power to determine whether we will experience the second death, where our bodies and souls will be destroyed in Hell.

People use other verses in the Bible to try to prove the existence of souls after death, such as the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and Jesus saying to the thief that today he will be with him in paradise. However, these all have reasonable explanations as to why the Bible is not advocating the existence of separate souls.

In conclusion, based on all the verses, I am convinced that we shouldn't hold a particular view on the state of the soul after death. There's just not enough information (unless I'm missing something).

My final point (on this sub-topic) is to those who hold to the modern traditional view. We must realize that our thinking has been corrupted by Greek thought. The non-traditionalist thinkers in this area (namely annihilationists / conditionalists) have real and valid points. We can learn a lot from them. Or, at the very least, we should use this point to further distinguish "gospel truth" from "our traditions". In the end, we really don't know what our souls are made up of - and it doesn't matter to the gospel. What is important is that we figure out what we can't know, stop making things up to cover for it, and stop excluding people who don't view non-essentials in the same way we do.

What did Jesus do after He died?

Now we get to the question of what happened to Jesus when He died, and how did Jesus suffering and/or death pay the price? How does substitutional atonement work? Presumably, if Jesus had not paid the price for us, we would have to pay it. What is that price? Why did Jesus have to be tortured before He died? Is that the price we would have paid? Why didn't Jesus just have to be killed, or even be a human sacrifice? Did Jesus do something after He died (and before He was resurrected)?

For determining what Jesus did on the cross, one key is to look at the Old Testament sacrificial system, the temple and the various kinds of sacrifices. There were several kinds of sacrifices (there's a very helpful series on Leviticus in the Naked Bible Podcast that explains all this). One was to create sacred space (i.e. the tabernacle and the temple) so that God's presence could be there. Another was to purify sacred space. Another was to purify people so that they could inhabit sacred space. Another was to purify people of unintentional sins.

Jesus' sacrifice for us covered all those things and more. He purified us and made us into sacred space so that God could live among us. He cleansed us of all sin so that we would be held guiltless and be able to be with Him after this life is over.

Jesus had to die a gruesome death to represent the depth and ugliness of our sins.

There are a couple views on where Jesus went after He died (and before He rose). See the notes on I Peter 3:18 – 20.

One of the most coherent and studied views I've run into is Mike Heiser's Deuteronomy 32 world view. It states that the thing Jesus did was to go to Tartarus to take back the world from those formerly in charge (of every nation that wasn't Israel) (I Peter 3:18-20). Formerly, these rebellious Elohim ruled over all the world (except for God's portion – Israel). Now, Jesus was claiming back all the nations.

Another view is that Jesus was just saying that Jesus did preach to the spirits now in Hades back in Noah's day. I think someone came up with this theory because they didn't know about Heiser's work tying everything together.

In discussing this topic, we also need to mention Ephesian 4:8, 'Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

Some say that Jesus took the Old Testament "sanctified" out of Hades and brought them to heaven.

If I understand this right and Christ did lead a host of captives when He rose from the dead, I think it more likely that Jesus made an end to death and Hades right when He rose, and took everyone in Hades out of time right to Judgement Day.

What did Jesus' ascension mean to us?

The final question is why did Jesus rise? Keep in mind this verse: I Corinthians 15:22 - 26

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

We all will rise and are judged. Jesus is the first to rise up into His new kingdom. In the end, He will conquer death. Jesus is perfect and is judged so. The rest of us are judged and would reap the second death, except that Jesus paid the price already by being a sacrifice for us. For those of us who desire to, we can now receive the judgement that Jesus alone deserved - Life.

This is as far as I understand. I still don't quite understand why Jesus doesn't have to reap the second death, which would be our judgement. Most would say it's because He was divine. When the infinite dies for the finite, the full price was paid on the cross, and in His final dying.