What happens when we die?

- 86% of Americans believe that God will judge every individual.
- 57% believe that salvation or heaven is earned by our character or good behavior.
- There is a growing tendency to believe that “all good people whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their Savior, will live in heaven after they die on earth.”

George Barna

“The movies increasingly banner that death is not final. They tell us that a spirit world is in store for us – without God, without judgment, without need of grace, without bodily resurrection, without fear of hell... We can feel better about this worldly licentiousness and greed, because a pleasant Karma awaits us all.”

Carl F. H. Henry

Even among world religions, Christianity is unique in what it teaches about the afterlife.

Buddhism and Hinduism believe in reincarnation. Man must go through an endless succession of painful lives before one can be free to merge for eternity with the “World Soul” in a state known as Nirvana.

Islam believes in a heaven and hell, but heaven is more of a male paradise.

Jehovah Witnesses believe that only the 144,000 will reign with Christ in heaven.

Mormons believe in a bodily resurrection to a threefold heaven – telestial, terrestrial and celestial. The highest level is for Mormons.

So what does the Scripture say?
I. WE WILL RECEIVE A NEW GLORIFIED BODY. VERSES 1-5

Paul uses the term tent to describe our earthly body.

One day, this present body will be laid aside.

We will receive a new body, made by God himself. It will be a glorified body like our Lord’s resurrection body.

We will receive this body at the time of Christ’s return according to I Corinthians 15:51-54 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

We long for our heavenly home and our glorified body.

- God has made us that way. “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” Ecclesiastes 3:11
- God has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge. In modern Greek the word arrabon means engagement ring.

II. WE GO IMMEDIATELY AND CONSCIOUSLY INTO THE PRESENCE OF OUR LORD. VERSES 6-8

Paul describes two options for the believer. Either we are at home in the body (on earth) or present with the Lord (in heaven).

If you asked Paul his preference, he would rather be with the Lord.

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” Philippians 1:21-24

There is no “soul sleep”.

There is no limbo or purgatory. They are not found in Scripture.

When an unbeliever dies, their souls go immediately to eternal punishment.

Luke 16:24-26
The Bible doesn’t teach the annihilation of unbelievers.

“It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment.”
Hebrews 9:27

III. WE WILL STAND BEFORE THE LORD TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT FOR OUR LIFE.
VERSES 9-10

This is the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ.
• Jesus stood before the bema seat of Pilate. Matthew 27:19
• Paul stood before the bema seat of Gallio. Acts 18:12
• All will stand before the judgment seat of Christ

For the believer, it is not a judgment for salvation, but for reward and commendation.

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”
Hebrews 4:13

God will test the quality of each man’s work. I Corinthians 3:10-15

We build on the foundation of Christ. There is no merit here. This is about stewardship.

Why is it a judgment of our works?
• It is impossible to separate trusting God from obeying God. “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.” John 14:21
• Obedience is the proof of our faith. If there is no fruit, how can there be genuine faith?

Conclusion

What will you do in response to this Scripture?

We have a great hope – eternal life, a glorified body and a new earth.

We have a great joy – to be at home with the Lord and with those we love.

We have an awesome responsibility – to live every day for Jesus.