

7 THE AFTERLIFE

NWAAGAA AND THE SPIRIT WORLD

Loud mournful crying was heard in the village as the sun began to rise on the horizon. An elder in the village had died and the family was mourning his death. Nwaagaa ran breathlessly to Poko's home, the eldest son of the village elder who had died. Poko had to be informed as soon as possible so that the necessary preparations for the funeral could begin. Proper sacrifices needed to be made so that the spirit of the deceased father would not suffer and linger near the village. The father's spirit also had to be appeased so that it would not return later and bring vengeance upon the family. Many other village customs would be observed to honor the dead and make sure his spirit was at peace in the spirit world.

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY:

- What happens after death?
 - Preparing for life after death
 - How to choose your eternal destiny—heaven or hell?
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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

DEATH IS CERTAIN

Where does the human spirit go when it enters the afterlife? What awaits the souls of people when they breathe their last breath and pass into the spirit world? Will the afterlife be a place of peace and rest or a

place of suffering? What must a person do in this life that will prepare his or her soul to enter into the next life? These are some of the questions that people all over the world ask themselves. Perhaps you have asked yourself these same questions.

Everyone must face death—the rich, the poor, the wise and the unwise. No one knows the hour when death will call a person into the next life. God’s Word gives the believer great hope. The follower of Jesus knows that when this life is over he or she will go to heaven and be in the presence of God; a place where the peace and blessings of God will be experienced forever.

LIFE IS SHORT

God’s Word reminds us how short life is. Our time in this world will pass very quickly. The Holy Bible compares our lives to a mist that is seen for a moment and then is seen no more. “Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a while and then vanishes” (James 4:14).

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The life of every person is like a mist that is seen for a moment and then is seen no more.
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The Holy Bible also compares our lives to grass and a flower that comes up from the ground but lasts for only a brief time. The wind blows on it, and it withers and dies.

“As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more” (Psalm 103:15–16).

A WARNING FROM THE LORD JESUS

The Lord Jesus warned us about the foolishness of storing up wealth in this life rather than preparing for the life to come. He said, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). Jesus also told a story about a man who lived only for this life and did not prepare for the life to come.

The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my

grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16–21)

If we live only for ourselves, we are not prepared for the life to come.

This man thought only of today; he did not think about his soul. He did not plan for his life after death. He forgot that God saw everything and knew everything that was in his heart. He forgot how short life really is, so he lived only for this life. But God called him a foolish man.

All that he stored up in this life was left behind when he died. And so it is with us. If we live for ourselves and are not serving God and following Jesus, we are not prepared for the life to come.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19–24)

PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH

How can a person be sure he or she is ready for the life to come? How do we store up treasures in heaven?

FIRST, WE MUST KNOW OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

How can a person be sure he or she is ready for the life to come?

God is a holy God, and all people are sinners. We need to have our sins washed away. Only Jesus has power to forgive our sins so that we can be ready for the life to come. When He comes into our lives and takes away our sins, we become a new creation. Our sinful lives are of the past, and a new life begins in following Jesus. God's Word tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

SECOND, WE MUST FOLLOW JESUS

We begin a new life when we decide to follow Jesus. He forgives our sins and changes our hearts. He makes our hearts and minds clean and new. He also gives us a desire to please God and obey Him. God's Spirit enters our hearts and gives us power to do what pleases Him. "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

When this has happened in our lives, we can then begin to lay up treasures in heaven, the place where God dwells. This will cause us to be prepared when this life is over. All the treasures stored up in this world will one day pass away, but the treasure stored up in the presence of God will last forever.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY—HEAVEN OR HELL?

HELL IS NOT GOD'S WILL FOR YOU

The Bible tells us that when the soul of a person passes from this life to the next, it either enters into the joy of God's presence in heaven, or into hell. Hell is a place of suffering that will never end. It is not God's will for you to leave this life and enter into hell. Hell was created for Satan and his evil spirits. One day Satan and his demons will be cast into hell. Jesus died so that all people might have the opportunity to go to heaven and be with Him forever. Your decision concerning Jesus now will determine your destiny in the next life.

It is not God's will for anyone to go to hell. Your destiny depends on your decision.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

The Holy Bible tells us that when you accept Jesus as your Savior and ask Him to forgive your sins, your name will be written in the Book of Life in heaven. Then on the Day of Judgment, the Book of Life will be opened to see if your name has been written in it. Anyone whose name is not found in the book of life will be lost forever. "If anyone's name

was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

Accepting Jesus as your Savior and living for Him each day of your life will ensure that your name is written in the Book of Life. Jesus died and arose from the dead. Then He ascended into heaven and is preparing a place for all of His followers. This is what He said about the place He is preparing for you.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:1–3)

THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN

God is going to show all the followers of Jesus the riches of His love and grace. He will give us His wonderful blessings throughout eternity. The Holy Bible says that God saved us “in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

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***Heaven is a place
of overflowing
peace and joy.***
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Followers of Jesus will live in heaven forever. It is a place of overflowing peace and joy—a place where there will be no more suffering, crying, death, or pain.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:3–4)

You can have the assurance that when this life is over you will go to be with God in heaven. Anyone who turns away from sin and accepts Jesus as Savior will have that assurance. If you and your family accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord, if you confess your sins to Him and ask Him to come into your heart, you would not need to worry about the spirit world. You will be safe in the protection of the all-powerful name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first step in ensuring your eternal destiny in heaven is by accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior. You can start on this new journey by saying the prayer below. Make this your personal prayer by adding your own words. May God bless you as you surrender the control of your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and serve Him with all your heart.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming to earth and dying for my sins. I believe that You died for all the wrong things I have done, and that three days later You arose from the dead. I accept You as my Savior and as the Lord of my life. Thank You that my name is now written in Your book in heaven. Thank You for preparing a place for me in heaven. Lord Jesus, I want to live with You forever. I pray this in Your name, Amen.

TO HELP YOU LEARN

Please answer these questions.

1. What does it mean when we say that life is like a mist?

2. How can a person be sure he or she is ready for the life to come?

3. If the Lord Jesus is your Savior, when you die, where will your soul go? (Draw a circle around the correct answer.)

Heaven

Hell

4. What is heaven like?
