

What happens to the soul after death?

There is much debate regarding what happens to our souls immediately after we die. Some believe that we enter a type of “sleep” and await the final judgment. Others believe we go to a temporary heaven or hell to await the final judgment. And others believe we are immediately present in either heaven or hell. There are arguments for and against each suggestion. Several scriptures, however, seem to point to the fact that our souls enter immediately into heaven or hell and await the resurrection of our bodies at the last day. For instance, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 6 that to be in this earthly body is to be absent from the Lord. He then goes on to say in verse 8 that the believers desire to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. This can lead one to assume that since being present in the body means absence from the Lord that when we die our souls leave the body and enter into the presence of the Lord. While some may believe this to be a stretch in terms of interpreting the verse, we can look at other areas of scripture to help us interpret what Paul might be saying. In the book of Revelation, chapter 20, verse 4 John says that he saw the souls of martyrs under the throne of God in heaven. So, apparently souls are indeed in heaven with God. Also, in Jesus’ parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16, we see that both men were immediately present in either hell or heaven immediately after death. When we take these scriptures together we can deduce that when one dies their soul immediately departs to one place or the other to await the resurrection of the body. However, it is important to remember that this, the immediate disposition of the soul after death, is a secondary doctrine and has what one believes on the matter has no real bearing on one’s salvation. Therefore we should extend charity and understanding to those who may hold an opinion that differs from our own.