

# 13 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?



1

## Heaven, Hell, or Nothing?



2

**In 1956 the Belgian Congo was caught in the grip of a vicious civil war. Dr. Paul Carlson's hospital was taken over by rebel forces. Many hospital employees were killed.**

**Unfortunately, Dr. Carlson was among them. When his body was found a few days after his senseless murder, there was a New Testament in his jacket pocket. In its pages the doctor had written the date.**

**It was the day before he was shot, and he penned a single word, "Peace."**

**Peace in the face of the worst of circumstances.**

**Peace in the face of death. What gave Dr. Paul Carlson such peace?**



3

**Is it possible for us to have this incredible peace when we face death? What can keep us from falling apart when death strikes?**

**There are so many unanswered questions regarding death.**

**What really happens when a person dies?**

**Is it heaven? Or hell? Or nothingness?**

**You know what's happened to the physical body, but where is the person who lived in it?**

**When people die, do they totally cease to exist or do they live on somewhere?**



4

**The pain of death is so searing that we want desperately to believe that there just MUST be some way the ones we love are not really gone—and that if we just search, we'll find a way to talk with them still.**

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5

**Very emphatically, voices are heard assuring us that this is all true and possible.  
Consider the so-called psychic medium James Van Praagh, for example.**

**His book Talking to Heaven: A Medium's Message of Life After Death, sailed to the heights of the best seller lists after his appearance on the Larry King Show.**



6

**Our hearts cry out to know the real truth about death and have peace as we face the grave.**



7

**(Video: 5 sec) Does God have anything to say on the subject? Does the Bible have anything to say when we die? The answer is an emphatic YES!**



8

**And the answer is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**



9

**After Jesus died on the cross, His friends placed His body, the Bible says, in "Joseph's new tomb."**



10

**The Roman Governor Pilate sent a guard, and his soldiers sealed the stone covering the mouth of the tomb with a Roman seal.  
Now no one could take His body.  
No one, that is, except Christ's Father.**



11

**Early Sunday morning while it was yet dark, a brilliant angel descended from heaven, rolled back the stone that covered the door of that tomb, and called Christ forth.**

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12

The risen Savior stepped forth in complete and total victory over death—a mighty conqueror. The soldiers were struck down as dead men by the glory of the angel.



13

The story of Christ's resurrection was the driving power of the early Christian church—as the Romans had no hope beyond the grave.

The only thing they knew was that the grave was a deep, dark pit out of which no one could ever hope to emerge alive again.

Now the Christians had a message of truest hope. The grave was not the final end.

Those who died “in Christ” would someday live again!



14

The catacombs under the city of Rome show the difference between the pagan's death in those ancient times—and that of the Christians.

Notice the epitaphs on the tombs of those who died in pagan hopelessness.



15

Over and over again are inscribed these words of sorrow: Goodbye forever—or, Goodbye for eternity.

Then notice the inscriptions on the tombs of the Christians:



16

Goodbye until we meet again—or, Goodnight until the morning.

Their tombs were inscribed with hope and courage, looking forward to a day of resurrection.



17

(Text: Revelation 1:18)

“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.



18

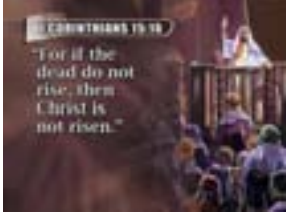
And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Revelation 1:18  
There is no real hope for the future beyond death unless a Christian knows what God has for him.

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19

The fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is Paul's great treatise on death and the resurrection. He clearly states that if there is no resurrection, then there is no future for the Christian.



20

(Text: 1 Corinthians 15:16-18)

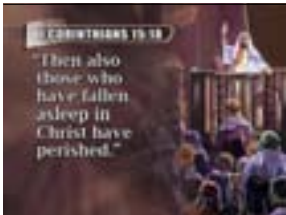
Notice what He said:

"If the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen,



21

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!



22

Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."

1 Corinthians 15:16-18.



23

But to understand why He says what He did, we must understand what the Bible teaches about death itself.



24

When God created man, It was never His intention that anyone would ever die.

After God created Adam, He looked at what He had made, and the Bible tells us in Genesis 1:32 that everything was VERY good!

There was no death, sickness, or sorrow on Planet Earth before Adam and Eve's fall.

Perhaps you will recall what God told mankind:



25

(Text: Genesis 2:16,17)

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;



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26

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,



27

for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”  
Genesis 2:16, 17.



28

The next chapter of the story is not so happy. The tragic story is recorded for us in the Book of Genesis, chapter 3.



29

The devil, using the serpent as his medium, appeared to Eve and tempted her to disobey God and eat of the forbidden tree. When Eve explained that God had told her not to eat of the fruit of that tree lest she die,



30

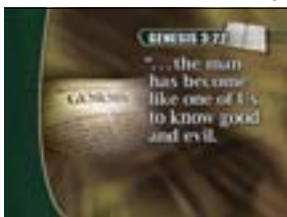
(Text: Genesis 3:4)  
the serpent said, “You will not surely die.”  
(Verse 4.)

This is the first lie recorded in the Bible about death!  
Eve chose to believe the devil and ate of the tree of the knowl-



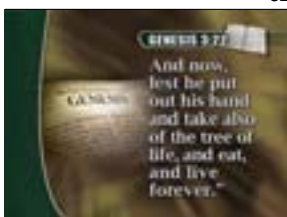
31

God was forced to separate Adam and Eve from the Tree of Life, because:



32

(Text: Genesis 3:22,23)  
“...the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.



33

And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.

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**Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden**



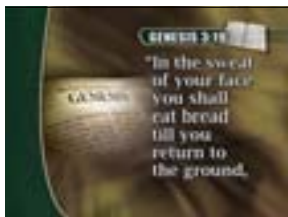
**to till the ground from which he was taken. Genesis 3:22, 23.**



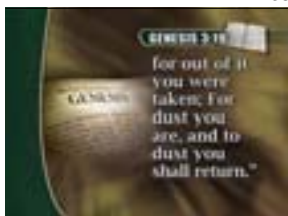
**Death came upon mankind because he was separated from God, the source of life-and from the Tree of Life.**



**(Text: Genesis 3:18,19)  
God told Adam at this time:  
"... You shall eat the herb of the field.**



**In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground,**



**for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Genesis 3:18, 19**



**Here is the key to understanding what death is all about and what God intends to do to save us from eternal separation from Him.**



**The Bible says that man would return to the dust from which he was taken.  
Notice how God created Adam:**

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42

(Text: Genesis 2:7)

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,



43

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

Genesis 2:7.



44

God took the elements of the earth and made a body for man. When He was finished fashioning the body for man, He had only a lifeless corpse—only a body.

It took something more to make him a living being. The Bible says here that God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life — and man became a living soul.



45

(Video: 3 seconds) We might make an equation like this:

Body

+ Breath

= A Living Soul.



46

(Video: 3 seconds) Or for death, we might write

Living person

— Breath

= Corpse.



47

(Text: Ecclesiastes 12:7)

That is what the wise man said in Ecclesiastes: “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

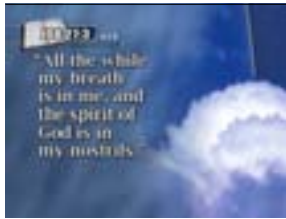
Ecclesiastes 12:7.



48

This is essentially the same thing that the Book of Job—the first of the Bible Books to be written—has to say about death.

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49

(Text: Job 27:3)

**“All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils.”**

**Job 27:3.**

**Notice that the Bible says, “All the while the spirit of God is**



50

**That is what God put in man’s nostrils when He created him.**

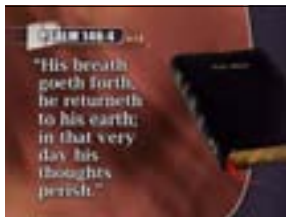


51

(Text: Psalm 146:3,4)

**Let’s take a look at another text:**

**“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.**



52

**His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”**

**Psalm 146:3, 4.**



53

**King David reveals the truth about death when he says that the breath leaves the body and returns to the earth. Man dies.**



54

(Text: Ecclesiastes 9:5,6)

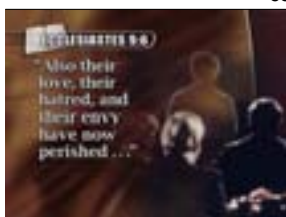
**This harmonizes with what Solomon said:**

**“For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward,**



55

**for the memory of them is forgotten.**



56

**Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished...”**

**Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.**



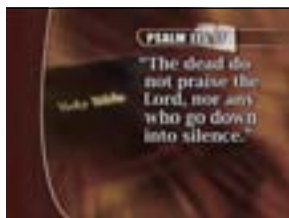
# 13 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?



57

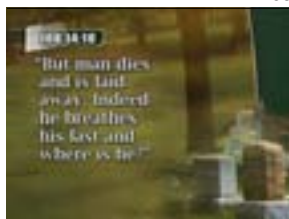
**(Video: 5 sec) He knows nothing!  
Nothing!  
NO! Nothing!**

**This is in keeping with what the Psalmist wrote, that the dead are not in heaven praising God.  
Then, where are they? you might ask.**



58

**(Text: Psalm 115:17)  
David makes it quite clear: "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence."  
Psalm 115:17.**

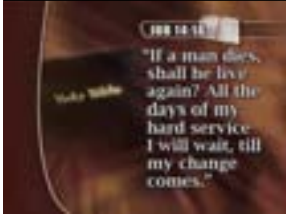


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64

Here we have it from God's own Word that man dies and lies down in the grave and does not rise until the resurrection day. Notice how He describes this:



65

(Text: Job 14:14,15)

"If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes.



66

You shall call, and I will answer You . . ."  
Job 14:14, 15.



67

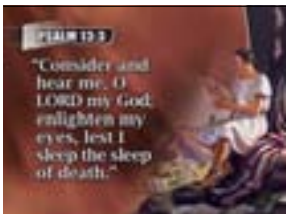
(Text: Job 17:13)

Notice that Job tells us: "If I wait, the grave is mine house. I have made my bed in darkness."  
Job 17:13, KJV.



68

Notice too that Job used the term sleep in talking about death. That's the same thing other Bible writers say.



69

(Text: Psalm 13:3)

David wrote: "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."  
Psalm 13:3.

David was afraid of sleeping the sleep of death—he wanted to live!



70

(Text: Daniel 12:2)

Daniel tells about the dead who will be raised:

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."

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71

One of the most comforting truths in God's Word is that when a person dies, he or she rests quietly, undisturbed by the problems of life until the call of the Life-giver.  
Is it any wonder that the Bible likens death to a sleep?



72

The prophet Nathan told King David what would happen to him when his time to die came.



73

(Text: 2 Samuel 7:12)  
"When thy days be fulfilled, . . . thou shalt sleep with thy fathers."  
2 Samuel 7:12.



74

Jesus Himself called death a sleep.  
He used the same descriptive term to describe the death of His dear friend, Lazarus.

Let's take a look at how Jesus and His close associates talked about death.

There was a home in Bethany that Jesus often visited-the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.



75

(Text: John 11:5)  
The Bible says, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." John 11:5.



76

One day when Jesus and His disciples were out by the Jordan River, He received an urgent message from his three friends in Bethany that Lazarus was very ill, but Jesus stayed where He was two more days.



77

(Text: John 11:11,12,14,15)  
Then Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

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78

The disciples were pleased, they said, “if he sleeps he will get well!”



79

“Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’



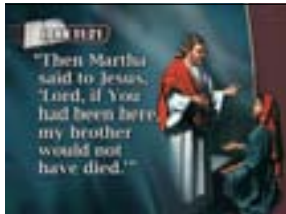
80

And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”  
John 11:11-15



81

They went their way to Bethany where the family lived. As they approached the city, Martha came running to meet them.



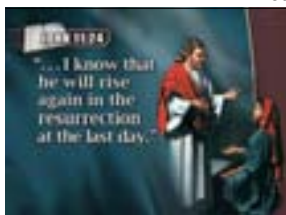
82

(Text: John 11:21,23,24)  
As she met Jesus, she said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”  
John 11:21.  
No doubt she was right about that!



83

He said, “Your brother will rise again.”  
Now notice carefully Martha’s response:



84

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”  
John 11:23-24.  
Martha assured Jesus that she expected to see Lazarus in the resurrection at the end of the world.



85

However, Jesus was about to give a dramatic preview of that event.



# 13 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?



86

(Text: John 11:25)

**Jesus then said plainly: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."  
John 11:25.**



87

**As Jesus came to Lazarus' tomb, John tells us**



88

(Text: John 11:35)

**that Jesus wept!**

**He was not weeping for His friend Lazarus.  
He knew He was going to raise him to life.**



89

**He was weeping for the grief the family and friends were experiencing and for all those through the ages who would sorrow and grieve when they lost loved ones.**



90

**Jesus asked that the stone sealing the entrance be**



91

**taken away.**



92

(Text: John 11:39)

**Concerned by such a request, Martha objected: "...But, Lord, ... by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."**

**John 11:39.**

**Yes, Jesus delayed His going to Bethany for four days. This delay would put beyond any doubt the fact that Lazarus was dead.**

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93

But the stone had been rolled away, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “LAZARUS, COME FORTH!”



94

Someone has said it was a good thing that Jesus specified He was speaking only to Lazarus; otherwise, every grave on Planet Earth would have opened!



95

What a day that must have been for the three friends in Bethany!

What rejoicing and joy!

Friends, that was an exciting day in Bethany,



96

but it was only a small preview of the glory and excitement that will occur when Jesus comes again and all the graves of His other friends who have accepted Him as their Savior are opened—and they rise to meet Him in the air!

This is the message of comfort that the apostle Paul shared with the early Christians:



97

(Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13,16)

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep,



98

lest you sorrow as others who have no hope!”

1 Thessalonians 4:13.

Paul tells us what Jesus will do when He comes the second time:



99

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel,

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100

and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16.



101

Paul describes in detail the events that will occur when Jesus comes:



102

(Text: 1 Corinthians 15:51-55)

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—



103

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

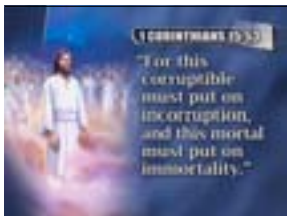


104

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

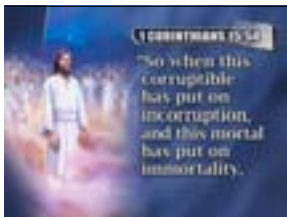
1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

Then Paul tells how we will be changed:



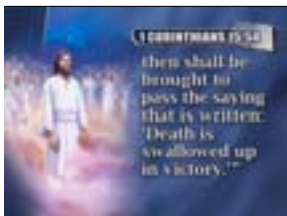
105

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality.



106

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality,



107

then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written Death is swallowed up in victory.

# 13 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?



108

**O Hades, where is your victory?”  
1 Corinthians 15:53-55.**



109

**Jesus had told the disciples that all would be raised from the grave.**



110

**(Text: John 5:28,29)  
“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice**



111

**and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life,**



112

**and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”  
John 5:28, 29.**



113

**Think for a moment: If people went to either heaven or hell at death, why would there be any need for the resurrection of either the righteous or the unrighteous?  
Why would Jesus make this statement as He comes back the second time?**



114

**(Text: Revelation 22:12)  
“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”  
Revelation 22:12.**



115

**It seems so plain!  
When people die, they are sleeping, they are resting from their labors and troubles until Jesus comes.**



# 13 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?



116

**What is He coming for?**

**He is coming to resurrect and be reunited with all of those who have accepted His sacrifice on their behalf.**

**Jesus also comes to welcome those who are His faithful followers at that time.**

**Just listen to this good news!**



117

**(Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:17)**

**“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.**



118

**And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”**

**1 Thessalonians 4:17.**



119

**We have seen that all of the saved will have a glorified body just like Jesus, and they receive immortality (eternal life) so that they will be with the Lord forever.**



120

**Someone may ask, “What about the thief on the cross?”**



121

**Let’s see what the Bible really teaches about that thief and the promise Jesus gave him.**

**Jesus was crucified between two thieves so that those crucifying Him might identify Him with the criminal element.**



122

**The book of Mark says that at first, both of the thieves taunted Jesus and said that if He really had power, He should deliver Himself and them.**

**Then one of the thieves became repentant and called out for salvation.**

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123

(Text: Luke 23:42,43)

He said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."



124

And Jesus said to him, assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Luke 23:42, 43.



125

Let's look at that promise again. Yes, friend! Today, right now, you too can have that assurance. In Christ there is assurance.



126

Even though Christ would die in that day, and would lie in the grave until Sunday morning, Jesus guaranteed escape from the grave.



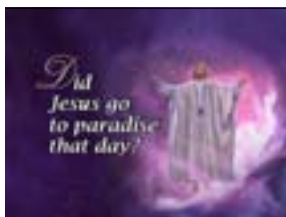
127

(Text: Luke 23:43)

(Video: 5 sec) What a wonderful assurance to the dying thief!

When there was no hope for him. When all he could see was a darkness that terrified his soul, Jesus could promise him hope beyond the grave.

Jesus promised that thief in that very hour, "Today I am telling, or right now I am telling you, "you will be with me in Paradise."



128

Some think that Jesus was promising the thief he would go immediately to paradise. But Jesus Himself did not go immediately to Paradise when He died.



129

The Bible tells us that He died on that day, Friday, and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

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130

On Sunday morning, Jesus appeared to Mary, and she wanted to worship Him, but He restrained her because He had not yet ascended to heaven. Listen to what He said:



131

(Text: John 20:17)

“...I have not yet ascended to My Father...”

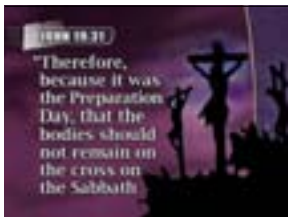
This was Sunday morning, and He said He had not yet ascended to His Father! John 20:17.

Jesus could not have been in paradise on Friday!



132

The Bible tells us that the thief was not in Paradise on Friday either.



133

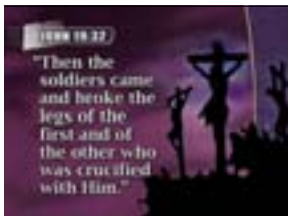
(Text: John 19:31-33)

“Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath



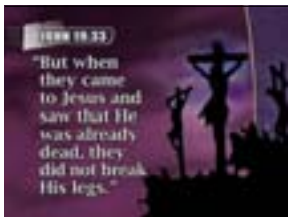
134

(for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” John 19:31



135

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him.



136

But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.” John 19:31-33



137

Here we see that they broke the legs of the two thieves so they couldn't escape,

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138

but they did not break Jesus legs because He was already dead on Friday.  
So, neither Christ nor the thief were in Paradise on Friday.



139

Jesus paid the price for our redemption and restoration.



140

The greatest gift that God can  
give to mankind is eternal life, victory over death!  
All other gifts are meaningless without it!  
And it is yours for the asking!



141

Your decision is the greatest decision you will ever make; your  
eternal future depends upon it!



142

This priceless gift of eternal life is promised to everyone who  
accepts Christ as his Savior and Lord.  
And the cost? Only a surrendered heart.

A heart cleansed and changed.  
A proud selfish heart made new at the foot of the cross.  
Christ made it all possible at Calvary.  
What more could He do.?



143

And eternal life can be yours if you want it enough.



144

Because He lives,  
we have a glorious hope—a hope beyond the grave!



# 13 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?



145

**One evening a series of meetings were being held in a small town in the eastern part of the United States. A young man wandered into those meetings deeply depressed.**



146

**The auditorium was right next to a cemetery. Before entering the auditorium where the meeting was being held, this young man slowly walked through the cemetery. He questioned the meaning of life.**

**He longed for forgiveness and peace of mind. As he thought about death, he wanted more than anything else the assurance of eternal life.**



147

**The topic of the Bible presentation that evening was “Hope Beyond the Grave.” The young man sat in the audience intently listening.**

**That very night he committed his life to Christ.  
That very night he accepted the Christ who died for him and rose from the dead to give him eternal life.  
That very night his entire life was changed by this living Christ.**

**That very night peace flooded into his soul.  
That very night new hope sprang up in his heart.**



148

**You can have this peace – this hope – this assurance of eternal life – life beyond the grave. If you want that assurance, would you like to stand right now as we pray?**