

*“And if the Anointed has not been raised
then our proclamation is vain,
and your faith vain;”
(1 COR 15:14)*

Immortality, Resurrection, and the Afterlife

THE RESURRECTION: PART 1

Most religions and cultures around the world have something to say about what happens to humans after death. Before addressing the history of the afterlife in Judeo-Christian belief, the stories of Jesus' resurrection in Gospels and Epistles, the development of traditional Christian doctrines, and finally how we apply the teachings in our lives today, let's have a conversation.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is the afterlife a universal human question? What is at stake, why is it important?
- What are the central concerns of the question? What needs to be taken account of in our understanding?
- What understanding do you lean to, and why? Do you feel in conflict between your religious understanding and your personal feelings, or are they in comfortable alignment?
- Why is the Resurrection central in Christian doctrine, to the extent that Paul (above) says our “faith is vain” without it?

Some Afterlife Teachings Across Religions:

- **The Land of the Dead:** Prominent in ancient Egyptian religion, the deserving and properly provided-for are reborn into a continuation of life while the rest are devoured.
- **The Grave:** A neutral place where all beings end up after death in a disembodied and faded existence. The dead are often reliant on their living ancestors to keep them connected to a more vibrant life through rituals and stories.
- **Reincarnation:** Beings who die are eventually reborn in a state based on their accumulated good and bad deeds. The soul may continue unchanged (H) or be transformed (B).
- **Heaven and Hell:** Two variously-named destinations, one for the good and one for the bad. They may be eternal or temporary, and may consist of various levels each.
- **Annihilationism/Universalism:** Two Christian variations on heaven and hell where the unsaved cease to exist (*oblivion*) and the saved enter heaven, or where all will eventually be saved and enter heaven after death.
- **Materialist:** What we think of as “life” ends in death, and immortality is achieved through genes and memories being passed on in descendants and culture.
- **Resurrection of the Dead:** The traditional belief in Judaism and Christianity in a bodily resurrection of the righteous in the future establishment of the Kingdom on Earth.
- **Apotheosis/theosis:** The potential for the human soul to become divine or participate in the divine in some way.
- **Returning to the One:** Suggestion that our sense of individual experience is ultimately temporary or an illusion and that upon death we are absorbed back into God or become aware again that we always have been God.
- *Others?*