



## **"What happens to us after death" (until judgment day)?"**

That's the main subject of a question emailed to me by someone whose mom had recently died. Here's the complete question: "There aren't many books or Bible studies out there that comment on this topic. What happens right after death? Do we "sleep" & are totally unconscious? Are we semi-conscious? Fully conscious? Are we aware/unaware of ??? In a physical place? In a spiritual realm? Of course, this is only until resurrection/judgment day..."

I checked the FAQ section on the website of the Missouri Synod ([www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)). I found that this is obviously a popular question. Here's the answer given on the website.

What Scripture teaches concerning the death of the Christian is summarized as follows by Lutheran theologian Edward Koehler in his book, "A Summary of Christian Doctrine:

In the moment of death the souls of the believers enter the joy of heaven. Jesus said to the malefactor: "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Stephen said in the hour of death: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Whoever dies in the Lord is blessed "from henceforth" (Rev. 14:13). Paul desires "to be with Christ," and adds that this is "far better" for him than to continue in the flesh (Phil. 1:23, 24). For this reason we pray that finally, when our last hour has come, God would grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.

Based on the passages referenced in that answer we can say this: At the moment of death our spirits go to be with the our Lord - in His presence.

In our current study on the book of Revelation (Wednesdays @ 11:30) we recently read in chapter six this portion of the vision of heaven that the Apostle John received from Jesus:

*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. [10] They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" [11] Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. (Rev 6:9-11)*

It is obvious from the portion in bold that the souls of those in heaven are not "sleeping" or "unconscious." Obviously they are aware of - at least in general - the difficult times that continue to be faced by Christians who are still alive on earth. Whether they are aware of specifics, we aren't told. As always when it comes to questions about heaven, the Bible doesn't give us all the specifics that we long for. But it is safe to say that our spirits won't be sleeping or unconscious until Resurrection Day. Of course, on that day our spirits will be reunited with our resurrected bodies to live in the new heaven and earth God promises to create for all who die with faith in Jesus as their Savior (John 5:28-29; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15).

The person who emailed me the question said it quite well at the end of her question:

"Regardless, I know I'll be right where I'm supposed to be---in God's presence!"

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)