

**Sheep and Goats**  
A History of Eternal Judgment  
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Slide 1

1. This is the second presentation in a series on the history of important Christian beliefs about life and death.
2. Today, we will look at the history of the Christian belief in an eternal judgment, described by Jesus as when the Son of Man will **“separate the people one from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,”** sending the sheep to **“eternal life”** and the goats to **“eternal punishment.”** *Matthew* 25:31, 46.
3. We will see that Christians have come to have different understandings about when and how that judgment will occur.

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1. Cultures all over the world have long taught and still teach that actions individuals take while alive can have consequences that survive their deaths.
2. For example, Hindus believe that the souls of those who have lived righteous lives will be reborn into people who will have an easier and more prosperous life.
3. On the other hand, the souls of individuals who have not lived righteous lives will be reborn into people or even animals who will have a harder life.

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1. Islam teaches that on Judgment Day, the resurrected dead will be taken to a bridge that leads to paradise.
2. **“This bridge is described as being sharper than a sword and thinner than a strand of hair.”** Dodge, *The Understanding Islam Book* at 156.
3. The righteous will be escorted to paradise by an angel and the wicked will fall from the bridge into hell. *Id.*
4. Islam teaches that hell is redemptive and may not last forever. *Quran* 78:21-30.

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1. Scholars believe these different and irreconcilable beliefs satisfy one of two basic human needs.

2. The first is an individual's need for a sense of ultimate fairness and justice **“in contrast to the obvious and undeserved rewards that too many sinners and oppressors receive on earth.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 488.

3. The teaching of Jesus that **“many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first”** speaks to the human need to find a sense of eternal justice in a world that often seems unjust. *Matthew* 20:16.

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1. The other need is for leaders to convince their subjects that they will suffer divine retribution for violating the leaders' rules even if they escape earthly punishment.

2. King Hammurabi's famous code of laws was issued in the name of Babylon's most important gods and relied on those gods for divine enforcement.

3. Persons accused of violating Hammurabi's rules were encouraged to jump in the Euphrates River, where the gods would save them if they were innocent.

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1. Western notions of an eternal judgment involving the gods find their earliest expression in ancient Egypt.

2. As shown in this copy of a papyrus drawing from about 1300 B.C., the soul of the deceased, often represented as a bird with a human head, would come before Osiris, the god of the dead, in the great Hall of Judgment.

3. Osiris would first ask the soul to recite a series of negative statements about how the deceased had treated the gods, including **“I have not done that which the gods abominate; I have not damaged the bread of the gods.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 59.

4. Other required statements related to how the deceased had treated other human beings, including **“I have not made anyone sick; I have not killed; I have not had sexual relations with a boy.”** *Id.*

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1. Osiris did not have to take the soul's word for its righteousness during life.

2. Egyptians believed the heart of the deceased would be weighed down by any earthly transgressions, so the heart was balanced against a feather.

3. If the heart weighed more than the feather, the soul and heart would be devoured by the creature beneath the scale and the person would simply cease to exist.

4. If the heart weighed less than the feather, the soul would be reunited with the essence of the deceased and the individual would go on living in an idealized world.

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1. The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, which Christians call the Pentateuch, report on the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt before their Exodus.
2. But nothing in the Pentateuch reports the Egyptian views about life after death.
3. One author speculates that the **“Egyptian religion seems to have been too foreign, too exotic, and too complicated to affect [the Israelites] much.”** Turner, *The History of Hell* at 12.
4. No matter what the reason, the Pentateuch includes no mention of life after death of any kind and the Sadducees at the time of Jesus, who relied entirely on the Pentateuch, rejected the idea of life after death. *Mark* 12:18; *Acts* 23:8.

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1. Because Jewish writings before the exile to Babylon in 587 B.C. contain no hint of life after death, **“[i]n the preexilic period, there was no notion of a judgment of the dead based on their actions during life, nor is there any evidence for a belief that the righteous dead go to live in God’s presence.”** *Oxford Companion to the Bible* at 15.
2. **“What is most obvious in the history of preexilic Israelite thought is that reward and punishment are certainties in this life.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 146.
3. For living in accordance with the commands of God, God promised **“[I]and, many offspring, length of days, and a favored life.”** *Id.*
4. For example, when men who had been ordered by God to enter the Promised Land refused to do so because they were afraid, God **“was angry and solemnly swore: ‘Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give to your forefathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly.’”** *Deuteronomy* 1:34-36.
5. The rewards and punishments of God described in the Pentateuch could extend to the descendants of the person being judged, as made particularly clear in the Second Commandment, in which God promises to **“punish[] the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.”** *Deuteronomy* 5:9.

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1. When Josiah became King of Judah in 640 B.C., he believed, based on the teachings of the Pentateuch, that the Jewish people had suffered because they had not been sufficiently faithful to the laws of God and had been worshipping idols.

2. To guarantee a better future, Josiah tore down the idols and instituted a series of religious reforms to follow God's laws **"to the letter."** Armstrong, *The Bible* at 22.

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1. However, in 609 B.C., King Josiah was killed in a battle with the Egyptians and the Kingdom of Judah came under the control of Egypt. *2 Kings* 23:29-33.
2. Twenty-two years later, Babylon conquered Egypt and Judah, destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and exiled Judah's most important citizens to Babylon.
3. They were allowed to go home after Cyrus the Great of Persia captured Babylon and surrounding areas, making the returning Jews Persian subjects.

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1. After the return from exile, Jewish prophets lamented that the people were accusing God of not providing the earthly justice he had promised.
2. For example, the prophet Malachi writes what people had been saying: **"It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evil doers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it."** *Malachi* 3:14-15.
3. As one author writes: **"As Israel was shaken by invasions, deportations and oppressive rule by other nations, faith in corporate salvation waned, as did belief that goodness would be rewarded on earth."** Russell, *A History of Heaven* at 28.
4. And so, **"[a]s the Jews heard about more attractive hereafters, they gradually revised their own conceptions of the afterlife . . ."** Segal, *Life after Death* at 174.
5. Some revisions conflicted with others, so **"[t]here is no one statement that can describe the 'position' of the Hebrew Bible on . . . the question of divine punishment and justice."** Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell* at 176.
6. As a result, uncertainties about the eternal judgment continue to this day.

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1. Many scholars believe *Psalms* 49 includes one of the first post-exilic statements about afterlife judgment, telling people not to **"be overawed when a man grows rich"** because **"he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life."** *Psalms* 49:16, 19.
2. On the other hand, the Psalmist reports that **"God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself."** *Psalms* 49:15.

3. These statements created a **“new departure”** in Jewish thought—**“the righteous and wicked are to be separated at death.”** Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell* at 162.
4. This hope that God would rescue the righteous from the grave may have been derived from the exiles’ exposure to Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Persians.
5. As one author writes: **“Persia . . . had long believed in the abodes of bliss and of punishment and may have passed on ideas about them to the Jews.”** Waterhouse, *Zoroastrianism* at 123.

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1. Zoroastrians believe that three days after death, the disembodied soul of the deceased travels to a bridge **“which spans the abyss of hell and leads to paradise on the other side.”** Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith*. at 92.
2. If the record of the soul’s life on earth is balanced in favor of good thoughts and deeds, the bridge is wide and the soul is escorted to paradise by a **“fair maiden.”** *Id.*
3. If the record shows the opposite, the bridge presents itself as a knife’s edge and the soul falls into hell for rehabilitative punishment. *Id.*
4. **“If the good and evil deeds done in life exactly balance, then the soul remains in an intermediate place called *hamestagan*.”** *Id.*

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1. For Zoroastrians, the judgment of souls made soon after death is only the beginning of the afterlife story.
2. Zoroastrianism also teaches that at the end of time, a savior will appear and destroy the forces of evil.
3. At that time, the souls of everyone in paradise and everyone in hell will rejoin their respective bodies at the place where they were buried and the **“dead will rise in their lifeless bodies.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 183.
4. **“[A]n ambrosia of immortality will be given to all. As a result, adults will be restored as men and women of forty, children as youths of fifteen.”** Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith* at 95.
5. As you can see, the Zoroastrian view adds to the Egyptian view the idea of an eventual bodily resurrection of everyone, righteous and sinner alike.

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1. After the return of the Jews from the exile in Babylon, their writings **“show a progression of Persian influence.”** Turner, *A History of Hell* at 42.

2. *Isaiah* 26:21, likely written soon after the exile, says that **“the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins.”**
3. As a result, referring to a group of foreign rulers, the writer says: **“They are now dead, they live no more; [those in the earth] do not rise.”** *Isaiah* 26:13-14.
4. The righteous will have a different fate: **“But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning.”** *Isaiah* 26:19.
5. **“[M]otiffs from the Persian notion of resurrection have entered Judaism, to be domesticated in a slightly different way.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 191.
6. Unlike in Zoroastrianism, in which all the dead are resurrected, in *Isaiah* only the bodies of the righteous will be resurrected—the wicked just stay dead.

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1. The *Book of Tobit* was written by an unknown Jewish author in the third century B.C. and is considered part of the Old Testament by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians but part of the Apocrypha by Protestants since Martin Luther.
2. *Tobit* is perhaps the earliest Jewish writing explicitly describing an apocalyptic final judgment at the end of time.
3. On his death bed, Tobit predicted a **“period when the times of fulfillment shall come”** and **“the temple of God will be rebuilt”** in Jerusalem. *Tobit* 14:5.
4. At that time, those who **“are truly mindful of God”** will **“live in safety forever in the land of Abraham,”** **“but those who commit sin and injustice will vanish from all the earth.”** *Tobit* 14:7.
5. Here we have an image, similar to that in *Isaiah*, that the righteous Jewish dead would be able to live forever on a perfected earth, but sinners would be destroyed.

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1. Not all Jewish writers after the exile accepted *Isaiah*’s vision of an eventual reward for the righteous dead, perhaps seeing it as only a metaphor for the revival of Israel. Segal, *Life after Death* at 261.
2. In about 200 B.C., more than 300 years after the exile, a Jewish resident of Jerusalem named Ben Sira wrote a book of sayings and sage advice titled the *Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* or *Wisdom of Ben Sira* and sometimes called *Ecclesiasticus*.
3. Like *Tobit*, the *Wisdom of Ben Sira* is considered part of the Old Testament by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians and Apocrypha by Protestants.

4. *Sirach* advised people to enjoy this life because there is nothing beyond the grave: **“Give, and take, and indulge yourself, because in Hades [the realm of the dead] one cannot look for luxury. All living beings become old like a garment, for the decree from of old is, ‘You must die!’”** *Sirach* 14:16.
5. For the author of *Sirach*, the timing or type of death provided God’s rewards and punishments without the need for an afterlife. Segal, *Life after Death* at 254–55.

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1. In about 167 B.C., the Greek ruler Antiochus IV rededicated the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem to the Greek god Zeus and barred the Jews from practicing their religion.
2. According to the *Book of Daniel*, Daniel predicted this **“abomination that causes desolation,”** in which **“the daily sacrifice is abolished.”** *Daniel* 9:27; 12:11.
3. Most scholars believe *Daniel* was written in about 164 B.C., making it **“probably the latest book in the Hebrew Bible.”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 652.
4. Among the large amount of evidence that supports this conclusion is *Daniel’s* use of words not in use in Israel at the time Daniel was said to have made his predictions.
5. *Daniel* therefore accurately predicts the events beginning in 167 B.C. because **“this is mostly prophecy after the fact.”** *Oxford Companion to the Bible* at 151.

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1. The desecration of the Temple made clear to the writer of *Daniel* that God’s justice would not just occur during this life—pigs were now being sacrificed in the Jewish Temple and God had not stopped the practice.
2. So *Daniel* draws on the language of *Isaiah* and ideas from Zoroastrianism to describe a final judgment that will occur at **“the time of the end.”** *Daniel* 8:13-17.
3. At that time, **“[m]ultitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”** *Daniel* 12:2.
4. *Daniel’s* promise that, as in Zoroastrianism, the bodies of both righteous and sinners would be resurrected **“is totally missing from any of previous references in the Hebrew Bible . . . .”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 263.
5. But, unlike in Zoroastrianism, in which the souls of the wicked have been punished before their reunification with their bodies, the bodies of the wicked dead of *Daniel* are not resurrected for an ideal life, but for punishment.
6. We will talk more about that punishment next week.

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1. In about 167 B.C., at about the time *Daniel* was written, the Jewish Maccabees revolted against the Greeks who had controlled them, giving rise to the Maccabean Wars.
2. Out of those wars came books that are part of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles but are considered Apocrypha by Protestants—*1* and *2 Maccabees*.
3. *2 Maccabees* reports that Jews were willing to die to re-establish Jewish laws because of **“the hope God gives of being raised again by him.”** *2 Maccabees* 6:14.
4. The mother of seven brothers who died in the fighting encouraged their martyrdom by explaining how the resurrection of the dead would be accomplished: **“[T]he Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.”** *2 Maccabees* 7:22–23.
5. As one author writes: **“The martyrs will be resurrected from nothing—even if the bodies of the martyrs are burned and their dust scattered—just as all human beings come originally from nothing and the universe itself was created from nothing.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 270.

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1. Notice that the mechanism of resurrection in *2 Maccabees* is different from that in Zoroastrianism, in which the purified soul is reunited with the lifeless body.
2. That is because, as one author states, **“[t]here is no notion in what may be called orthodox Israelite religion of a separate existence for the soul after death.”** *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* at 295.
3. Instead, many Jews at the time understood that the dead were “asleep” in their graves, a kind of hibernation or suspended animation.
4. For example, Jesus said: **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up.”** *John* 11:11.
5. As one author writes: **“[The pre-resurrection existence] was but an insubstantial state, which retains the existence of the person until the resurrection . . . .”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 280.
6. At the resurrection, the dead would simply wake up and then be judged.

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1. In about 332 B.C., Greek forces under Alexander the Great had defeated the Persians and gained control of the area now called Israel.



2. The Greeks expected their subjects to become familiar with Greek ideas, eventually leading to **“another phase in Hebrew thought.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 253.
3. By the time of Alexander the Great, *Phaedo*, written by Plato in 360 B.C., had already become popular for its views on the afterlife.
4. Written as a dialogue between Socrates, about to be executed, and those skeptical of Socrates’ confidence that his soul would live on, Plato sought to prove the eternal nature of the human soul.
5. Plato first noted **“an old tradition,”** presumably from either Persia or Israel, that people can **“arise from the dead.”** Cope, *Plato’s Phaedo* at 25.
6. Starting with the assumption of physical resurrection of the dead, Plato deduced the need for an immortal soul: **“And if this [bodily resurrection] be so, that the living arise from the dead, must not our souls necessarily exist there below?”** *Id.*

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1. For the Persians and the Jewish writers who wrote about resurrection, the physical body was the most important component of an individual.
2. The resurrected body would live forever on a perfected earth, where it could partake of bodily pleasures. Segal, *Life after Death* at 235.
3. For Plato, the body was corruptible, perishable and in the nature of a prison, chaining down the soul from its desired place with the gods. Cope, *Plato’s Phaedo* at 50.
4. Plato believed that at death the indestructible and immortal soul was free **“to dwell with the good and wise God,”** where it can **“be born again.”** *Id.* at 39, 45.

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1. In *Phaedo*, Plato describes the judgment of an immortal soul that enters Hades, the multi-level realm of the dead.
2. The souls of those guilty of the most heinous crimes while alive are sent **“into Tartarus, whence they never come forth.”** Cope, *Plato’s Phaedo* at 101.
3. Those souls judged the most virtuous are allowed to live forever without bodies in a **“pure dwelling place above.”** *Id.* at 102.
4. **“After Plato, the Greek world took the notion that the isles of the blessed are in the sky seriously. If the soul is immortal, it must return to the immortal realm.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 234.

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1. The *Book of Ecclesiastes*, written sometime after arrival of the Greeks, contains the following statement: “[T]he dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” *Ecclesiastes* 12:7.
2. Because the Jews believed that the dead remained in the ground, the writer says “the spirit of man rises upward” as Plato claimed. *Ecclesiastes* 3:21.
3. This is the first time the Hebrew Scriptures describe an animating spirit leaving the body at death and being returned to the gods above.

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1. *Jubilees*, written by a Jewish author about 150 years before Jesus, contains a description of the final judgment apparently combining Persian and Greek views.
2. Reminiscent of the views of Zoroastrianism, it states: “**And there shall be no old man nor one who is [not] satisfied with his days, for all shall be (as) children and youths. There shall be no Satan nor any evil destroyer; for all their days shall be days of blessing and healing.**” *Jubilees* 23:28-29.
3. Reflecting Greek ideas, *Jubilees* then states: “**And their bones shall rest in the earth, and their spirits shall have much joy.**” *Jubilees* 23:31.

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1. The *Wisdom of Solomon* or *Wisdom* was written in the name of Jewish King Solomon by an unknown Jewish author in the first or second centuries B.C.
2. It is considered part of the Old Testament by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians, but part of the Apocrypha by Protestants.
3. A prayer in *Wisdom* expressly adopts Plato’s ideas of an immortal soul trapped in the prison of a perishable body:

**For the reasoning of mortals is worthless,  
and our designs are likely to fail,  
for a perishable body weighs down the soul,  
and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.**

*Wisdom* 9:13-15.

4. According to *Wisdom*, the destination of the soul will be determined “**on the day of judgment.**” *Wisdom* 3:18.

5. The **“souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment will ever touch them,” “but the ungodly will be punished as their reasoning deserves.”** *Wisdom* 3:1, 10.
6. In *Wisdom*, **“Platonic ideas of the inherent immortality of the soul have supplanted the Hebraic . . . doctrine of the resurrection of the body.”** Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 75.
7. **“Instead of an after-life in the shadow-land of Sheol, [*Wisdom*] teaches that one’s moral character determines one’s future destiny.”** *Id.* at 74.

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1. Philo of Alexandria, born to one of the most prominent Jewish families in Alexandria in about 20 B.C., incorporated Greek philosophy into his writings because he **“claimed that the true wisdom of the Greeks was derived from the Bible.”** Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* at 233.
2. Philo articulated the Greek view this way: **“[I]f we were to die, then our soul would be released according to its proper life, being released from the evil and dead body to which it is bound.”** Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation, I* 108.
3. In 1906, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* concluded that **“belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent.”** *Jewish Encyclopedia* – Immortality of the Soul.

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1. A document found at Qumran among the Dead Sea Scrolls called the *Messiah Apocalypse*, says that a coming Messiah, who will sit on the **“throne of the eternal kingdom,” “liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent]”** and **“will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live; he will proclaim good news to the poor.”** 4Q521.
2. This description echoes the words of *Isaiah* 61:1 that the Messiah would **“preach good news to the poor”** and provides the earliest known Jewish connection between the expected Messiah and the resurrection of the dead.
3. Because of *Daniel’s* association of the resurrection of the dead with the final judgment at the end of time, the expected Messiah was now associated with the final judgment, once left to God.

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1. A section of *1 Enoch* called *Similitudes*, likely written just before the time of Jesus and considered Pseudepigrapha by Jews and most Christians, describes the final judgment in terms familiar to Christians today .
2. A coming **“Son of man”** will judge humanity **“sit[ting] upon a throne of glory.”** *1 Enoch* 45:2–46:3.
3. That judgment assures the righteous to **“fear not . . . when you see sinners flourishing and prosperous in their ways”** because **“in the day of the great judgment,”** the sinners will be punished and the righteous will experience joy **“as the angels in heaven.”** *1 Enoch* 104:3-4.

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1. It should be apparent by now that at the time of Jesus those Jews who believed in an afterlife judgment held at least two different and contradictory beliefs about it.
2. The first was the traditional Jewish view, probably derived from the Persians, which anticipated the resurrection of a perfected physical body with the arrival of the Messiah, when the body would be judged and sent to its reward or punishment.
3. When Jesus told the sisters of the dead Lazarus, who was **“asleep,”** that he would **“rise again,”** Martha replied: **“I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last time.”** *John* 11:11, 23-24.

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1. The second view, derived from the Greeks, taught that an immortal soul inherent in everyone would leave the corrupted physical body at or soon after death and be returned to God, making the body of no further use.
2. God would then judge the soul and send it to its eternal reward and punishment in Hades or, if the deceased had been sufficiently worthy, the soul would stay with God.

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1. The Greek ideas about judgment of the soul were known by New Testament writers.
2. *2 Peter* reports that God sent wicked angels **“down to Tartarus”** for judgment, an idea based on *Phaedo*. *2 Peter* 2:4 (Young’s Literal Translation).
3. The famous parable of Jesus about the rich man and Lazarus is expressly set in Hades, the segmented realm of the souls of the Greek dead. *Luke* 16:22-26.

## Slide 35

1. For early Christians, the resurrection of Jesus proved the truth of Jewish promises of a life after death and a reward in that afterlife for the righteous.
2. Jesus himself promised that the dead would be judged and the righteous would be rewarded by entry into **“the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”** *Matthew 25:34.*
3. But exactly what would that promised judgment look like—would it involve a soul judged immediately at death, as taught by *Ecclesiastes* and *Wisdom*, or a body brought back to life at the end of time, as taught by the *Book of Daniel*?
4. Early Christians assumed that the resurrected Jesus provided a model for the resurrection they would experience.
5. As Paul wrote: **“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”** *1 Corinthians 15:30.6.*
6. But if Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, what was the nature of his resurrection?
7. As it turns out, it was no easier to answer that question then than it is now because **“the New Testament accounts could support a range of interpretations”** about the nature of the resurrected Jesus. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* at 6.

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1. On the one hand, the most important indication that the resurrected Jesus was not simply the disembodied spirit of Greek philosophy was the fact, reported in all the Gospels, that his tomb was empty. *Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:3; John 20:2.*
2. Under the Greek view, Jesus’ mutilated and useless body would have stayed in the tomb, separated at death from his immortal soul.
3. As one author writes: **“The empty tomb . . . denies the notion that Jesus’ resurrection is merely as a ‘spirit,’ no different in theory than any other death.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 451.

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1. In addition, *Luke* reports that when Jesus appeared to his disciples, **“being amazed, and becoming affrighted, they were thinking themselves to see a spirit.”** *Luke 24:37* (Young’s Literal Translation).
2. But Jesus said to them: **“[H]andle me and see, because a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me having.”** *Luke 24:39* (Young’s Literal Translation).

3. In addition, unlike a disembodied spirit, the resurrected Jesus joined his disciples for a meal and later became hungry and ate a piece of fish. *Luke 24:41-43*.
4. He continued to display the bodily wounds from his crucifixion. *John 20:27-28*.

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1. On the other hand, *Mark* reports that Jesus **“was manifested in another form”** to his followers. *Mark 16:12* (Young’s Literal Translation) .
2. *Luke* reports that the resurrected Jesus walked for hours with his followers on the road to Emmaus without them knowing who he was and then **“became unseen by them”** as soon as they recognized him. *Luke 24:13-31* (Young’s Literal Translation).
3. *John* reports that the resurrected Jesus suddenly appeared behind locked doors. *John 20:26*.
4. Paul says the resurrected dead will be given **“spiritual bodies,”** an oxymoron that apparently seeks to have it both ways. *1 Corinthians 15:44*.
5. Finally, Jesus himself went to heaven, the realm of the spirits. *Luke 24:51*.

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1. Because the earliest followers of Jesus expected his imminent return, debate about the nature of the promised judgment was not important—they would soon experience it.
2. As one recent author noted: **“With one voice, all the New Testament writers proclaimed they were living in the ‘last days’ and interpreted Christ’s timing references to mean the resurrection, rapture, judgment and arrival of the kingdom of God would take place during their lifetime.”** Fenemore, *The Twilight of Postmillennialism* at 53.
3. **“[W]hen there is a resurrection at the end of time, the issue is moot because the end settles all the scores.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 490.

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1. Jesus did not return and **“by the end of the second century the resurrection of the body had become a major topic of controversy among Christians, as well as for pagan critics of Christianity.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 568.
2. Rejecting the idea of a bodily resurrection as ridiculous and impossible, Christian supporters of the Greek view that the souls are judged immediately upon death cited statements in the New Testament to support that view.
3. For example, remember the famous words of Jesus to the thief dying with him on the cross: **“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** *Luke 23:43*.

4. **“A number of theologians have used this passage to demonstrate that the notion of an immortal soul is antique within Christianity.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 467.
5. We will talk more about this in three weeks when we talk about heaven.

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1. In challenging the idea of the resurrection, Sadducees asked Jesus which of a series of deceased wives would be married to their former husbands **“at the resurrection.”** *Matthew 22:28*.
2. Jesus replied: **“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; for they are like the angels in heaven.”** *Matthew 22:30*.
3. So here was more evidence to support the claim that at the time of the judgment, the dead would not have earthly bodies, but would be like the angels.

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1. *Hebrews 9:27* says that **“people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”**
2. Some early Christians took this to mean that the eternal judgment is necessarily directed at the souls of the dead and not at those resurrected to life at the end of time.

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1. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: **“I declare to you brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. \*\*\* For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”** *1 Corinthians 15:50, 52*.
2. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul raised his own questions about the nature of that resurrection.
3. He describes a **“man in Christ,”** who may well have been Paul himself, **“caught up to the third heaven.”** *2 Corinthians 12:2*.
4. He adds: **“Whether it was in the body or apart from the body I do not know; God knows.”** *Id.*
5. Paul’s speculation that a **“man in Christ”** may have gone to heaven apart from his body makes him **“the earliest [Christian] author explicitly expressing this kind of angelic transformation in Judaism.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 414. S

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1. But other early Christians believed that the idea of an immortal soul was **“subversive of the very essence of Christianity”** because it denied the uniqueness of Jesus. McConnell, *The Evolution of Immortality* at 48.
2. For example, Tertullian, an early Church Father, rejected the immortality of the soul as an idea that **“even almost all heretics accept.”** Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* at 4.
3. He argued **“that anyone who denies the resurrection of the flesh is a heretic, not a Christian.”** *Id.* at 5.
4. As one author states: **“If immortality were a natural property of the soul, no one would need a Savior; one would need only an operational manual for the soul as an ethical guide, the right moral instructions to train the body to care properly for the soul.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 534.

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1. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is a Pseudepigraphic work purporting to record the last words of the 12 sons of Jacob, but was probably written as by Christian authors as late as the second century A.D.
2. The *Testament of Asher* explicitly shows the Greek idea of a soul being judged at death in the context of Christian teachings: **“For the latter ends of men do show their righteousness (or unrighteousness), when they meet the angels of the Lord and of Satan. For when the soul departs troubled, it is tormented by the evil spirit which it also served in lusts and evil works. But if he is peaceful with joy he meeteth the angel of peace, and he leadeth him into eternal life.”** *Testament of Asher* 6:4-6.
3. As more and more time passed without the promised bodily resurrection, **“the Greek influence gained the domination in the early Church [and] the Platonic doctrine of a natural immortality which it brought with it came to be accepted.”** McConnell, *The Evolution of Immortality* at 47-48.

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1. But belief in a bodily resurrection at the end of time did not disappear.
2. In the fourth century AD, church officials from Cappadocia relied on Greek philosophy to prove belief in an immortal soul going to be with God at death also supported the ultimate resurrection of the body as long taught by the Church Fathers.
3. Plato taught that there exists in the minds of the Gods the form of a perfect object that can be used as the model or blueprint for a real, but imperfect object.
4. As a result, when, for example, a physical chair or table is destroyed, the form of that chair can be used to recreate a replacement chair or table.



5. For the so-called Cappadocian Fathers, **“the individual soul is indestructible, being in fact an articulate portion of the substance of the mind of God.”** McConnell, *The Evolution of Immortality* at 46.
6. Therefore, God can use the returned soul, like Plato’s forms, to recreate the human being that once housed that soul.
7. The ideas of Plato had come full circle.
8. Plato originally used belief in bodily resurrection to prove the existence of an immortal soul that was returned to God at death.
9. Christian theologians now used Plato’s immortal soul returned to God at death to prove the truth of bodily resurrection.

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1. The result was that theologians avoided the need to choose between an immortal soul and bodily resurrection by adopting **both** ideas.
2. As one author explains: **“As Christianity came to terms with the continued existence of the world, it incorporated two conceptions that were quite foreign to its original formulation—the immortality of the soul and an interim state in which the soul exists until the Savior arrives to judge the world.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 486.
3. The person who most clearly articulated that belief is Augustine, a converted Christian who lived in North Africa in the early fifth century and became one of the most influential Christian theologians of all time.
4. In his famous book, *The City of God*, Augustine wrote: **“Souls are judged when they depart from the body, before they come to that judgment which must be passed on them when united to the body and are tormented or glorified in that same flesh which they were inhabited.”** Turner, *The History of Hell* at 74.
5. Said another way: **“Immortality of the soul now; resurrection of the body at the last trumpet.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 583.
6. While awaiting that **“last trumpet,”** the already-judged soul would reside **“only in an intermediate state”** awaiting the time it is reunited with the body, when it **“shall be judged again.”** *Id.*

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1. The conclusion of two judgments, separated in time, raised new questions.
2. If the soul was in an intermediate state awaiting the resurrection of the body, where was it and what was its condition?

3. As one author writes: **“As time went on and the end of the world was delayed, the fathers [of the church] had to consider the state of the holy people after their death and before the endtime.”** Russell, *A History of Heaven* at 54.
4. From those questions came teachings of heaven and hell as the domains of souls.
5. Next week, we will look at the history of Christian teachings about hell.
6. As we will see, the traditional views of hell as a place of eternal punishment in fire are not made inevitable by anything in the Bible and are actually contradicted by a number of Biblical teachings.
7. In three weeks, we will look at the history of heaven and at claims of even some Christians that the Bible does not support the idea of heaven, claims that I reject.
8. I will end this series on a hopeful and positive note.

#### **Resources:**

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