

# HOPE FOR HUMANITY

## REVELATION TODAY

### PRESENTATION 9 • CHARMED BY THE SUPERNATURAL

**SLIDE • RADIO STATION MICROPHONE.** He was—still is—a morning show DJ in Wichita, Kansas. They had been married for ten years, and in that time she had battled ill health. She had been admitted to a hospital and while there contracted COVID-19, and she never came home. He said he had lost “his superpower.”

**SLIDE • GRAVE.** Not long after his wife’s death, he wondered if she was still speaking to him. As he drove to work one day in the early-morning darkness, he noticed that two dozen streetlights along the highway had turned purple—her favorite color. He took it as a sign that his wife was still close to him.

**SLIDE • HOLDING A PHOTO.** CNN reported that research suggests at least 60 million Americans have had what are being referred to as ADCs—“After death communications.” It might be a relative appearing in a strikingly realistic dream, a sudden whiff of fragrance worn by a departed loved one, or unusual behavior by animals. Or maybe feeling a touch on your shoulder at night, hearing a sudden warning from a loved one, or seeing the full-bodied form of a recently departed relative appear at the foot of your bed.

The author of a book called “Hello from Heaven” was quoted as saying, “They want you to know they’re still alive, and that you’ll be reunited with them when it’s your turn to leave your lifetime on Earth. They want to assure you they’ll be there to meet you and greet you—and perhaps even to assist you—as you make your own transition.”

More than 55 million people die in the world each year. In the United States there’s a death every 11 seconds or so. But death is difficult. The Bible calls death an enemy, and it says death is the last enemy that will be destroyed. Isn’t that good news?

**SLIDE • REVELATION 21:4** says that “God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death.”

In fact what we know is that one day there is going to be a resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 says,

**SLIDES (2) • THESSALONIANS 4:16–17.** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain. He interrupted a funeral procession to raise the boy and reunite him with his mother. He raised the daughter of Jairus, and perhaps most famously he raised Lazarus from the dead after Lazarus had been dead for four days. What a wonderful thing to know that death isn’t the end. Families will be reunited, it means we get to see our loved ones again, it

means that one day there's going to be a reunion you could hardly imagine. This is one reason the return of Jesus is called the blessed hope! The separation death has caused will be gone forever. No more goodbyes!

**SLIDE • CEMETERY.** Now as people we're pretty good at knowing what we know. That is, we know we live. And we know we die. And we know there's going to be a resurrection. But what happens in that space between death and the resurrection?

Some will tell you purgatory, or hell. Some will say there are people who become angels, or ghosts. Houses decorated for Halloween tell people get into the idea of life after death.

Or let's put it another way.

**SLIDE • STEPHEN HAWKING.** Recently, the noted theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking died in Cambridge, England. As well as being a famed scientist, Stephen Hawking was also a well-known atheist. He is quoted as saying that a belief in the afterlife is a "fairy story for people afraid of the dark," and he said, (**SLIDE • HAWKING WITH QUOTE**) "There is probably no heaven, and no afterlife either." He said plainly, (**SLIDE • HAWKING WITH QUOTE**) "I'm an atheist."

So if that's the case, Where is Stephen Hawking? Where did Dr. Hawking go when he died? I'm going to tell you.

Let's start with a well-known Bible story. The story of the death and resurrection of Lazarus. The account is found in John 11.

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:1.** "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha." They sent a message to Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" (John 11:3).

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:4.** "But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

But Jesus did a curious thing. Instead of going immediately to Bethany, the Bible says He stayed for two more days where He was.

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:11-14.** Jesus said to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

Notice how Jesus explained death. He called it a sleep. "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep."

Death has been a hot subject since the creation of the world. Human beings were not created to die. We were created to live forever. But sin came into the world, and it brought death as a consequence.

**SLIDE • GENESIS 2:16-17.** At creation, God said to Adam and Eve, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Well, that was clear. But Satan has a habit of misrepresenting what God says. And he did that here.

**SLIDE • GENESIS 3:1.** Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

**SLIDE • GENESIS 3:2-3.** And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

**SLIDE • GENESIS 3:4.** "Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

Did you see that?! He lied! It was an outright lie. He lied about death, telling Eve that if she ate the fruit she wouldn't die as God said she would.

**SLIDE • EVE.** As we know, Eve ate the fruit and death came as a result.

**SLIDE • CAIN AND ABEL.** It wasn't long and Cain killed Abel. So where did Abel go when he died?

**SLIDE • BIBLE.** Well, let's see what the Bible says. By the time Jesus got to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:21-23.** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord," "if You had been here, my brother would not have died. "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Jesus offered Martha hope. "Your brother will rise again." And Martha believed Jesus!

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:24.** "Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha knew Lazarus was dead, and that He would rise again.

But in between times... What happens?

**SLIDE • CHURCH.** You may have been told that when a person died they went straight to heaven or straight to hell. Or purgatory. Of course their body would stay in the grave, but the SOUL would go on to another place. But let's look at that. Is that what the Bible teaches?

**SLIDE • GENESIS 2:7.** And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

**SLIDE • DUST OF GROUND + BREATH OF LIFE = LIVING SOUL.**

Based on what we see written in the Bible, a soul is not something living or conscious. A soul is what you are, not what you have. It's like saying, "Aunt Charmaine is a dear old soul." You mean she is a dear "person," not that she is a disembodied spirit. Adam was a soul. This is why the Bible says 3,000 souls were added to the church in Acts 2. 3,000 people. A soul is a person. Biblically, "soul" can refer to the spiritual nature of a person, but it never means a spirit that leaves the body at death. Paul talked about 276 souls being in a boat. People.

Look at Psalm 146:4 with me.

**SLIDE • PSALM 146:4 KJV.** His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth. In that very day his thoughts perish.

The Bible says that when a person dies, that person's "breath" goes back to God. Now, what is that breath? Is it NOT something alive or conscious. It isn't something capable thinking. We've read that at creation, human beings were not given a soul, they were made "living souls." Don't be surprised.

Well, if we don't 'have a soul', perhaps we could say we have a spirit.

**SLIDE • ECCLESIASTES 12:7** refers to this, when it says, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Here we see the "spirit" goes back to God. But what is that spirit?

**SLIDE • JOB 27:3.** "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils." Job makes it clear—the spirit that goes back to God when a person dies, is "breath"—the breath of life God put in Adam when He created him. Breath—the life spark, the power God gives to keep us up and running. Not a "soul" where people go on living after they die. When a person dies, their "breath" goes back to God.

I have heard it said that human beings have an immortal soul. So I looked through the Bible. Know what I found? The Bible says very clearly that the only one who has immortality is God! It says that very thing.

**SLIDE • 1 TIMOTHY 6:15–16.** "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only has immortality." That's as clear as a bell.

**SLIDE • 1 TIMOTHY 1:17.** Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God...

Only God is immortal. It just isn't possible for people to have immortal souls. Search the Bible front to back, and you will never find mention of an "immortal soul".

**SLIDE • ROMANS 2:7.** In fact, Romans 2:7 says that we "seek for ..... immortality." We surely wouldn't seek for something we already have.

**SLIDE • EZEKIEL 18:4** says, "The soul who sins shall die."

If people die and go straight to heaven, then what could Jesus possibly have been saying to Martha?

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:25.** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

When will that person live? At the resurrection on the last day.

**SLIDE • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:17.** Speaking of the resurrection, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

He says if there is no resurrection, the dead are without hope. If they died and went to heaven, Paul wouldn't say this.

See, everything hinges on the resurrection. Which means everything hinges on Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life. There would be no need for a resurrection if people died and went to heaven, and the whole of 1 Corinthians 15 makes it clear how important the resurrection is.

**SLIDE • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42–44.** Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:42–44, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

You can see that. We have a natural body, but when we are raised we have a spiritual body. And as the story of Lazarus shows, the dead sleep between the moment of death and the resurrection.

How, then, did we get to the place where it seems just about everyone believes that when a person dies, that person goes right on living? We go back to the Garden of Eden, where Lucifer said, You will not surely die.

The Bible makes clear that human beings are mortal.

**SLIDE • BIBLE.** Let's look at more of this from the Bible.

**SLIDE • ACTS 2:29.** "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day."

We see where David is, and is not. The Bible is clear.

**SLIDE • ACTS 2:34.** "For David is not ascended into the heavens..."

When you get to heaven you'd expect to see King David there. But Peter said under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that David is not there!

**SLIDE • BIBLE.** The dead are not praising God (Psalm 115:17).

**SLIDE • JOHN 11:43–44.** "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Jesus didn't call him down from heaven or up from hell. He called him from the grave, because that's where Lazarus was. And what happened with Lazarus is going to be replayed many times over when Jesus returns. The dead in Christ shall rise. People you have known and loved—they'll rise! Friends you have lost—they'll rise! Children, parents. They'll rise! Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life!

**SLIDE • PSALM 17:15.** This is why David said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

**SLIDE • DANIEL 12:2.** Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.

Heart disease takes the life of your loved one. Diabetes. Cancer, or a stroke. We're getting those folks back one day! Today they sleep, but soon they rise! Because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life!

Why Paul says, Behold, we shall not all sleep. I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep.

**SLIDE • CANDLE.** You keep your eyes open as you read the Bible. You will see it say again and again that death is a sleep.

Nobody in heaven is watching their loved ones down here suffering. That wouldn't be heaven. The dead are sleeping. And soon they'll be awake.

**SLIDE • ECCLESIASTES 9:5.** The word of God says, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know nothing." Isn't that clear?

The Devil is a deceiver. He's a liar, and the father of it. Spiritualism is one of his greatest deceptions. You've got people going to seances to speak with the dead. That's not the dead they're

communicating with, that's evil spirits. It's what King Saul did before he died, going to see a witch. That's all this is today. Deception, and demon activity.

**SLIDE • LIGHTS.**

What about "near death experiences"? They really happen, and many people talk about either heading along a tunnel towards a bright light, or they say that when this happened that their soul floated up out of their body and they could see themselves and they watched what was going on. But this isn't evidence that people live after they die.

Let's think about that. When do people have these Near Death Experiences? It seems like they happen when a person is under great stress.

**SLIDE • OPERATING ROOM.** On the operating table, hanging between life and death. But they also happen to some people using drugs. This is brought on by the brain doing strange things under stress.

Look at this with me. It appeared in the Washington Post a few years ago.

**SLIDE • QUOTE.** *"A new study suggests these "out-of-body" and "near-death" experiences may be influenced by a portion of the brain misfiring under stress."*

The researchers point to a processing center in the brain known as the "angular gyrus." The "angular gyrus" is thought to play an important role in the way the brain analyzes sensory information to give us a perception of our own bodies. When it misfires, they speculate, the result can be visions of floating outside of ourselves. (WaPo, Wednesday 18 September 2002)

The dead don't go home after they die. They don't haunt houses. They sleep until the resurrection. And it's important to know this, when we consider what the book of Revelation says.

**SLIDES (2) • REVELATION 16:13–14.** And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

We're told we're going to see miracles of a spiritualistic nature. And we see them today.

**SLIDE • APPARITION.** You've heard of apparitions that occur. People claim to be seeing the Virgin Mary in any number of places around the world. Not every supernatural event is of God. The Devil is looking to deceive, and few things are more powerful than to have a departed loved one return to you with a message from God.

There is spirit world, but not all spirits are of God.

**SLIDE • GRAVEYARD.** So here's what we know.

The dead aren't alive. They sleep, waiting for the resurrection.

But what about when people say that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord? Remember Kitty Genovese? They said 38 people witnessed or heard her death. The New York Times reported that, back in the day when the New York Times might as well have been the Bible it was so trusted. But what have we agreed is the standard? Not the New York Times. Not a preacher. But the Bible.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul is simply saying that he would rather be no more in this body, but in the new heavenly body he'll get when Jesus returns.

Here's what the passage actually says.

**SLIDE • 2 CORINTHIANS 5:8.** "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

So what awaits the dead?

**SLIDES (2) • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51–52.** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

**SLIDES (3) • 1 THESSALONIANS 4:14–18.** "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Jesus promised the resurrection as a wonderful hope. Notice: Comfort! It doesn't take away our pain, but God offers us comfort!

**SLIDE • STEPHEN HAWKING.** So where's Stephen Hawking? Same place as Elvis, (**SLIDE • GEORGE WASHINGTON**) George Washington, and Dr Martin Luther King Jr, and Mother Teresa, and Lazarus, and Gandhi, and Jackie Robinson and (**SLIDE • FREDERICK DOUGLASS**) Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. They're sleeping a dreamless sleep, and those who died in faith will come out of the grave when Jesus returns.

**SLIDE • CALVARY.** Now, what about the Thief on the Cross? Someone is going to ask about that.

**SLIDE • LUKE 23:42–43.** Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.

So think about this. Jesus said this to the thief on the cross on Friday. Now, let's fast forward to Sunday when Jesus has risen and meets Mary in the garden. (**SLIDE • JOHN 20:17**) "Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father." On Friday Jesus promised the thief that he would be with Him in Paradise. But on Sunday Jesus hadn't gone to Paradise!

Remember, the Scriptures aren't going to contradict themselves. So look at what the thief actually said.

**SLIDE • LUKE 23:42.** "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

The thief didn't ask go heaven that day, but "when you come into thy kingdom." We still pray for that. It is His second coming. What's the solution?

In the English Bible, it comes down to the placing of a comma.

Punctuation was not added to the Bible until the 1400s. The Bible wasn't written with punctuation, like we have today. Punctuation was added to the Bible by translators. Mostly they got it right. Sometimes they didn't.

Jesus is talking to the thief on the cross. And He says in Luke 23:43, (**SLIDE • LUKE 23:43**) with comma in wrong place—"Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

How can that be when the Bible has been so clear that death is a sleep? Shift that comma to where it ought to be, and what does it say?

**SLIDE • LUKE 23:43.** with comma in right place—"Assuredly I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

And you ought to know that dozens of Bible translations put the comma in the right place.

Jesus used the word 'today' to emphasize blessed truth. He assured the thief that even as he hung on the cross he could know that when Jesus comes in His kingdom He will then be with Jesus in Paradise. Not then, not today, but at the second coming of Jesus when the resurrection takes place.

And he gives you that same assurance. If you've accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, Jesus says to you, "I tell you today. I tell you now. You can be sure now. You will be with me in Paradise!"

**SLIDE • THE CROSS.**

**SLIDE • SECOND COMING.** Jesus is soon to come, in power and great glory. Those who died will be raised, families will be reunited, there will be no more death, and we will be forever with Christ....

Closing Illustration



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