

## **TOPIC XXIV**

### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE????**

This question is frequent and popular. I received the following note one day and decided to respond as best as I could after studying the Biblical passages alluding to this issue.

"Good Evening Bob:

I have a couple of questions that came up following a funeral we attended. Several things were said that caused questions to be raised.

When we die what goes on? Can spirits die? Do our spirits return to heaven? If so, why then a resurrection? Do spirits live somewhere and then meet the Lord? Can they reappear in this life? And how about the transfiguration on the Mount, Moses and Elijah with Jesus, what's the significance of this ?

When we die and meet others will I recognize my family or love ones or my brethren in Christ? There is no crying or sadness in heaven I understand. Will those sad memories banks be erased? Will heaven come to the new earth?

All these questions and more came to mind after the funeral."

### **RESPONSE**

Where to begin? This is an issue with a great deal of mystery because the scriptures don't tell us everything and there seems to be conflicting ideas here and there. What I will do is lay down the major passages and then deal with the odd ones or the anomalies and the confusion as we go along. So hang in there. Both testaments deal with this in some degree, but the New gives more information specific to the quest.

The difficulty is that they often tie into the coming of Christ and all the passages relating to the end of this age and so on. We also have to deal with prophecy and all that. So it is a big deal. I am going to display the key passages below. I am going to try and avoid the "tribulation", Day of God's wrath", "judgment" and so on if I can.<sup>1</sup> Even still, there are a many of them.

Your first statement/question reveals the confusion so many have. It is,

"When we die what goes on? Can spirits die? Do our spirits return to heaven? If so, why then a resurrection? Do spirits live somewhere and then meet the Lord?"

You and I have heard phrases like, "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes and the spirit returns to him who gave it." None of this is in the Bible. It is so ingrained in the heads of the people by ministers and churches that it

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<sup>1</sup> See other topics for discussions about these matters.

is accepted without question. The same goes for, "He's gone to be with the Lord", or "His soul is now in heaven" and the like in many variations.

Ministers state all the time, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord", an adaptation of Paul's note to the church of Corinth in II Corinthians 5:8. That is not quite what Paul is saying yet this conclusion is certainly understandable. What we don't have in concrete are a few things. One is that though there appears to be: 1: Leaving the body then, 2: Clothed with a "dwelling" (something we will inhabit) from heaven and then, 3: Being at home with the Lord, [check the entire passage from 4:17-5:9 (or 10)] a strict assumption as to what this means and the timing thereof leaves us in conflict with some other passages where Paul talks about this same thing. We will come back to this in a second. But a comment. The "spirit" of man can certainly die, be destroyed or killed. Another topic for another time.

But first, going back to the main theme, for example, Christ told the thief according to Luke 23:43, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Well, the concept of paradise is quite different than heaven. Worth a study sometime I'm sure. (We'll make a comment or two later.) Not only that, knowing that the thief and Christ died that afternoon, we also read in I Peter 3:18-19 and 4:5-6 that Jesus, during His time prior to His resurrection (it is assumed) went into some "underworld" or "prison" of the spirits of the dead. Note, I Peter 3:18,

"For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19: in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison," then, 4:5, but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 4:6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God.*"

Weird, I know. Some cast a jaundice eye on these two epistles wondering if Peter really wrote them. I think he did...well, to the extent he dictated them as he was essentially illiterate. Then after the resurrection we have accounts of Jesus ascending into the sky, sitting down at God's right hand and all of that. I wonder what the thief thought when, "in paradise", Jesus had to leave for other appointments so soon.

Then we have Philippians 1:21-24,

21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22: But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23:But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; 24: yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."

There is no timing on when this will occur, but it seems to coincide with the II Cor. 5 theme.

But then Paul writes I Corinthians 15. Here is 20-55 below.

20: But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

21: For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. 22: For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23: But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

Whoa. When? Those in Christ will be made alive at His coming? Well, that doesn't jive with II Corinthians, does it?

24: then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25: For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26: The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Then he mentions the resurrection of the dead after which he says,

35: But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" 36: You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; 37: and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38: But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. 39: All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. 40: There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another. 41: There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. 42: So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; 43: it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*. 45: So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. 46: However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47: The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. 48: As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. 49: Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now, it seems to me that there is a similarity between this last few verses and II Corinthians 5:1-4 that says,

5:1, "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2: For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3: inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4: For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life."

But Paul here goes on to say,

5:6: "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—7: for we walk by faith, not by sight—8: we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

But in I Cor. 15, he says,

51: "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52: in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53: For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54: But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55: "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

So when is this??? I think I can offer an answer, but first, we add to that,

I Thessalonians 4:13-18;

13: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15: 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17: Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18: Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Here it is clear (and contrary to what many teach) that those who "sleep" in Christ (an euphemism for "death" – vs. 16) will be raised to life when Jesus comes at the "last trumpet" (note: Matthew 24:31) and both those alive in Christ and the dead will be lifted to meet the Lord in the clouds. Note that the (we who are alive and remain have not been "raptured" previously and Paul includes himself in the crowd). The phrase ("bring with Him those who have fallen asleep") does not refer to dead souls having "already gone to heaven".

Many interpret this phrase as one of the following: Some take the word "asleep" to mean that their "spirits" literally "sleep" awaiting resurrection while others see it as a euphemism of those who have already ascended to be with Christ and will return with Him. Some interpret the phrase "bring with Him" as bringing those "sleeping ones" to resurrection life with their predecessor Jesus while others interpret it to mean that Jesus brings those "raptured" saints with Him at His return.

But the matter is that as Christ was raised from the dead, so will be those in Christ at His coming. Note the point in the beginning of verse 14 followed by "even so" or "likewise". The word "bring" is not a helpful translation of "ah-goh" the Greek word for "lead" or "bring forth", simply meaning that God will bring forth those who have awaited resurrection.

Paul is speaking of the coming of Christ and the order of ascension when both the faithful living and dead will be taken up to meet Him in the air. The ascent of the living will not precede the resurrection of the faithful dead. So the dead will be raised first and then the living will be caught up to meet Him in the air. The purpose of this statement is to bring comfort to them. This comfort ("para-ka-leh-oh"- again) can also be translated "encouragement". It is a flexible word fitting any one of various spiritual needs the hearts of people need at the moment. I recommend my commentary on I and II Thessalonians found at [www.bibleclassroom.org](http://www.bibleclassroom.org) that will cover this and many issues you raise if you wish.

But the timing is again at Christ's second coming.

It is also odd that in II Corinthians 4:13-14, right before the strange passage we discussed on page 1 and 2, (II Corinthians 5:8) that Paul wrote in II Cor. 4:13-14, "But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." So how does this jive with the passage in the next chapter? I think the II Cor. 5:8 passage has been misunderstood.

Further, in the very next chapter after this Paul writes, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." I Corinthians 6:13-14 No going to "heaven" prior to a resurrection and no rapture. (I had to throw that in).

Here is some more and another reference as Jesus says,

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment." John 5:28-29

A little later Jesus said,

"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." John 6:39-40. And, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:44

Then,

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." John 11:23-24

Well, when is the "last day"? This phrase is only found in John. It is, according to the various texts, on the day when the resurrection of the dead takes place. Notice 5:28-29 above. Reading more in chapter 5 one discovers that this "last day" is not only a resurrection day for all, but a judgment day for those committing evil. There is no judgment for the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14)

If we take this in a strict sense, the good and evil are raised at the same time, (note Acts 24:15, Daniel 12:2).

We seem to have a confirmation in II Thessalonians 1:6-10,

6: "For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7: and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven

with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8: dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9: These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10: when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed."

Recalling I Corinthians 15 we have,

20: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21: For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. 22: For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23: But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24: then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25: For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26: The last enemy that will be abolished is death."

This also coincides with a general resurrection. A. Christ rose, B. His own will rise, C. The dead in Christ will rise, and the inference from 24 is D. The wicked are dealt with. These last three happen at the last trumpet, which coincides with the "last day" it seems to me.

Also: I Peter 1:3-5,

1: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4: to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5: who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

What I am pointing to here is the phrase, "... a salvation ready to be revealed in the **last time**."

By the way, notice that it is "The inheritance" that is reserved in heaven, not the heirs. Now, students of prophecy make a great deal out of Revelation 20 and mold it to say whatever doctrine they are teaching at the time. But Revelation is apocalyptic literature, and until one understands that Jewish medium, they are not qualified to interpret the book. Period. Therefore we leave it for now.

We could quote from Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 about Christ's coming and His raising the dead to be with Him at that moment to underscore the "last day", "last trumpet" argument but we discussed this a bit and you can read it for yourself.

The preponderance of evidence is first most, "The saints are raised at His second coming." They join Him in the air, not in heaven." Where does He go from there? In terms of our discussion it doesn't matter, but I am pretty sure it isn't back to "heaven". We hear of a "Wedding Feast" in heaven all the time. No such idea in scripture. Again, people's false interpretation based on a faulty premise. In Matthew 25, the wedding feast occurred after the Bridegroom came back. In everything I can grasp from scripture, the feast is here on earth following Christ's return and triumph in victory.

For example, in Isaiah 25:6-12, we read,

6: "The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, *And* refined, aged wine. 7: And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. 8: He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. 9: And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation." 10: For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain, And Moab will be trodden down in his place As straw is trodden down in the water of a manure pile. 11: And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it As a swimmer spreads out *his hands* to swim, But *the Lord* will lay low his pride together with the trickery of his hands. 12: The unassailable fortifications of your walls He will bring down, Lay low *and* cast to the ground, even to the dust."

Then in 26:19-21,

19: "Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew *is as* the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. 20: Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs *its* course. 21: For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain."

In Matthew 22, a lengthy parable of Jesus about the "wedding feast" seems to have the feast and then the judgment of the wicked. But no mention of this occurring in heaven.

For example, Isaiah 2:1-4 notes,

1: "The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2: Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. 3: And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4: And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war."

Also Micah 4:1-2; Isaiah 49:6-10; Daniel 7:14; Matthew 8:11. Thinking out loud, no on paper, I wonder if a "paradise" will exist during this "wedding feast" and be held therein? This whole "paradise" thing puzzles me. Maybe we will take a look in a while.

In John 14 we read,

1: "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2: "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3:

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. 4: "And you know the way where I am going." 5: Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

From here, Jesus does not really answer the intent of Thomas' question. But what He does say is that He goes to prepare a place for His own. The picture is clear. When a man proposes to a woman and she accepts, in ancient time he went to his father's house and built on a place with walls adjoining his father's house. This was to be the place where he and his bride would live. The technical name is an "insula". The disciples knew the concept but didn't know where this would be, so Thomas asked - (I like Thomas).

This specific "place" is almost avoided in any of these discussions, as is the timing. Notice the interesting words in Hebrews 11,

13: "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14: For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15: And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16: But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."

What city? Where? When? It looks like the saints of old must wait for everyone else according to Hebrews 11:39-40. "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect (complete)."

But then you asked about Moses and Elijah appearing on the mountain with Jesus. We know they died and were buried. Some think God took Elijah to "heaven" in II Kings 2:1-15. But, alas, it was not so. Even after Elisha took on the mantle, Elijah could not resist writing a letter to the king of Israel in II Chronicles 21:12. The "heaven" was the sky, one of the three areas described by the word "heaven" in both testaments; Sky (birds in "heaven"), Stars in "heaven" and, of course, God's dwelling place.

But! Then what about the mountain thing with Jesus?

Before I give my theories about the whole matter (and they are theoretical, believe me) let's summarize some apparently contradictory or at least confusing scenarios.

1. When believers die they: A. Remain so until Christ returns. Then they are raised, come to life and given a new body. B. They possibly are somehow found in an in-between state or realm that could be called "paradise", "home with the Lord" (wherever He is at the time – maybe two or more places at once? He is seen in "heaven" at the right hand of the Father as well.)
2. Yet Jesus preached to the dead in some "prison" apparently, those who were unsaved and did so during the time he was in the grave. What was this?
3. It seems that it is possible (maybe, but not concrete) that when a believer leaves this life, he



finds himself with the Lord somewhere. Not a great deal of info on this.

4. There is no doubt that when Christ returns all questions are answered about this.

5. But then, there seems to be times when the dead (including the ghost of Samuel – I Samuel 28) make a post death appearance like Moses and Elijah. Where were they? Was this a unique thing God produced or a general reality revealing that the "dead" are really alive somewhere in some way? Do the Catholics have something when talking about purgatory? Paul throws in baptism for the dead in I Corinthians 15:29. Thanks.

Actually, we need to mention that there is no specific statement that anyone goes to "heaven" at all. If there is, let me know. There are 457 times when "heaven" is mentioned in the Bible. In Rev. 3:12, and 21:1-2 "heaven", the New Jerusalem, comes down to earth from "heaven". In almost all the cases the word "heaven" in Rev. refers to the sky. I can't find where we go specifically to "heaven" at anytime.

Now, a word about the "paradise" thing. The word is only used three times in the entire Bible, all in the New Testament.

The thief reference above, (Luke 23:43); II Corinthians 12:1-4, to wit,

1: "Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3: And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—" 4: was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak."

It is assumed Paul was speaking of a personal experience in a vision. The third "heaven" is in the "spiritual" dimension. In this dimension there are numerous places, territories and so on. Some of these "places" are beings that are not permitted to leave unless God commands it.

This also is another topic. But it is pretty clear in scripture. One of these places is apparently "paradise". The word means "a park" or "a garden". In the Old Testament, the word "Eden" is used of "paradise" and it is found there 20 times. "Eden" refers to several things, but the idea of "garden", "park", "paradise" fits most of them.

Man was at one time in "paradise" or "Eden". Some say it was on the earth. Some say it was on the earth but not really earthly. I sort of fit in with that idea. Perhaps another case of "heaven" coming to earth, but in this case it was the territory of "paradise" from which man was kicked out and it disappeared. And there are other theories as well.

Regardless, we have it again in Revelation 2:7,

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

The allusion to Genesis is unmistakable. Tree of life, etc. The idea is of course, full restoration to our original dwelling place. And apparently it will be aligned with the new heavens and new earth. A lot of material on this in the scripture.

Okay, so a question as we conclude. Could Jesus be in paradise with the thief and whoever else and also be in the "prison" of spirits preaching and also be at the right hand of God and other places all at the same time?

Well?????? Anyway, here is my theory. I will tell you that it can answer all the dilemmas.

The only thing I can muster is a Biblical truth that all the issues we have questions about can be found to revolve one way or another around "time". Even the "where's" actually include a "time" factor because after all, how can these things all be true or occurring at the same *time*?

The entire spiritual dimension is outside of time and space. The idea of "eternity" or "infinity" carries with it the absence of limitations such as time and space. Thus God can field a million prayers "a second" (in our framework) and take an eternity to answer each one if He chooses, and if He does, we will get a response immediately if that is what he decides to do.

We speak of God being everywhere at the same "time". And so on. But we cannot enter this dimension, but it can enter ours. (For a full discussion on this, go to my website: [www.bibleclassroom.com](http://www.bibleclassroom.com) and under Bible studies go to topical studies and read the paper; "Something Must be Eternal")

In other words, heavenly stuff can enter our realm, but we can't go there in our present state (note: I Corinthians 15:50 and the context once again.) In brief then, Jesus can easily be everywhere all the time in any form He so chooses. Now, about the seemingly contradictory themes about where we go and when we go after death.

Here's my thought based on the simple idea above. The after death "experience" of anyone could be simply be solved by eliminating the hang-up over time and space.

For example. Let's take a saint who dies centuries ago, one who just died, and one who is living when Jesus gathers up His elect. The experience of each one, regardless of the when they died, will be immediate and together. That is, the one who died centuries ago will sense an immediate rising into the presence of the Lord at the same "time" as the one who just died and the one who still lives when Jesus comes. All will sense an immediate rising into the presence of God and all of this will, by our thinking and time calculation be a long way off in the future. Yet even for those thousands of years in the grave, their rising will seem instantaneous as all are raised together at the same "time", even though thousands of years apart in their deaths.

Thus, all the ideas are feasible. All the teachings are true. "With God, nothing is impossible."

Now to the other questions,

"And how about the transfiguration on the Mount, Moses and Elijah with Jesus, what's the significance of this?"

Moses and Elijah are seen appearing with Jesus at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28-36). There is no detail as to from where they came, but their purpose is to bear witness to Jesus in that Moses represents the Law, Elijah the prophets and Jesus the kings. God's response made it clear that Jesus held superiority over the prophets and the Law and was the fulfillment of them.

"Can spirits die? Do our spirits return to heaven?"

The word "spirit" is another of those words to which we try to give specific designation. But it is used in many contexts and, depending on the intent of the text, is often interchangeable with "heart", "Mind", "soul" and so on. The attempt has been to define these terms as some sort of components or divisions of humans, i.e. a "person" is made up of three parts, blah, blah. A close and honest look at them however, will reveal that their use is simply to point out aspects of personality, character, motive and so on. When used in a cluster, the point is to say, "with all one's being" such as in Matthew 22:37, YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

Mark leaves out "HEART". Luke adds "MIND" (10:27). John doesn't have it at all. The idea is not to compartmentalize people at all. If it were, then good luck trying to reconcile the three accounts.

Going back to the word "spirit", it is used in every sort of way and is the exact same word in every case. Note the examples below.

Exodus 35:21, "Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose **spirit** moved him came *and* brought the LORD'S contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.

Exodus 35:31, "And He has filled him with the **Spirit** of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship;"

Numbers 5:14, "...if a **spirit** of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has defiled herself, or if a **spirit** of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has not defiled herself,..."

Joshua 5:1, "...kings of the Canaanites who *were* by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no **spirit** in them any longer because of the sons of Israel."

Deuteronomy 34:9, Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the **spirit** of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

I Samuel 16:14, "Now the **Spirit** of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil **spirit** from the LORD terrorized him."

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28,

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The word for "spirit" is essentially "breath" or "breath of life".

Now, it is apparently the "spirit" that leaves the body when a person dies. For example,

When Jesus died, He quoted a portion of Psalm 31:5, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit;"

In Matthew 27:50 we read, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit."

And in Acts 7:59 we read, "They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

"When we die and meet others will I recognize my family or love ones or my brethren in Christ?  
There is no crying or sadness in heaven I understand. Will those sad memories banks be erased?"

I do not know as there is no specific scripture I can recall that speaks to this. But we don't "go to heaven" strictly speaking.

"Will heaven come to the new earth?"

Yes, according to Rev. 3:12; 21:1-2; Hebrews 13:14

Then all the questions will be answered...or unnecessary.