

Life After Death—What Does the BIBLE say?

1. Death is like a sleep in an unconscious state until the resurrection. John 11:11-14
2. The devil is masquerading as the dead to deceive people. He is a liar. John 8:44
3. To accept and follow Christ is the only way to have the hope of the resurrection.

J.B.Phillips, who translated the Bible into modern English, was sitting in his home one day when suddenly, what looked like C.S.Lewis, the famous Christian philosopher, who had died some time before, appeared before him and then disappeared.

Wondering what was going on, Phillips visited another Christian leader, who simply said, "This sort of thing is happening all the time, JB!"

My own mother-in-law lost her youngest daughter in a car accident many years ago. One day she saw what looked like her daughter appear in front of her. She said "No! It can't be! It isn't!" and the thing vanished.

These "appearances" can be multiplied over and over. The arch deceiver is constantly trying to have people believe that the dead are NOT dead!

In the very beginning, when God said to our first parents, "**But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.**" Genesis 2:17

In the very next chapter 3: 4,5 we have "**the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall NOT surely die.**"

Here we have the very first lie! No wonder Jesus said what He did in John 8:44.

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Ever since then Satan, that old serpent the devil, (Rev. 12:9) has been deceiving the whole world, perpetuating that original lie! And, most of the world and the churches in general have accepted this lie!

It is becoming more and more popular every day, to try to contact the dead, through spirit mediums, channellers, witches and wizards, séances, tarot cards, palm reading, star signs, near death experiences, UFOs and on and on. Satan is using the media in a mighty way to promote his lie, and there's not a day goes by that we see this lie being promoted somewhere, even in the churches!

All of mankind has to face death some day, and we all want to know what is “on the other side”. It is the imperial question we all need answers for. The answers are right there in Scripture if we will just study it for ourselves.

On a tombstone in Virginia, USA is the following inscription:

“Stop my friend, as you go by.

As you are, so once was I.

As I am now, you soon shall be--

So, prepare yourself to follow me.”

A young boy not content with this, scrawled underneath,

“To follow you I am not content,

Until I know just where you went.”

So, where do the dead go at death?

Some believe if they are good they go to Heaven. If they are bad they go to Hell!

Others say Purgatory—Eastern Religions say --Re-incarnation.

Is there really conscious life after death? Can we really contact the dead? Is there any hope beyond the Grave? Let’s look at the Bible where we find the answers.....

Let’s begin in Revelation where Jesus said,

“I am He Who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades (the Grave), and of Death.” Rev 1:18

There is life after death! There is hope beyond tomorrow! It is because Jesus now has power over death and the grave!

Let’s look at a wonderful story in John 11. Jesus was doing what He did best—healing broken lives and hearts, when a man sent from Martha and Mary burst through the crowd with a cryptic message---“Your friend Lazarus is sick!”

John 11:5,6 “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.”

It is often hard to understand God’s ways, and His plans. He doesn’t always work to our schedules and expectations. But the Bible says:

Rom 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

So **FOUR** days later Jesus turned up in the town of Bethany where Martha and Mary lived. And when He did the Bible says: **“Jesus wept.” John 11:35**

God understands when we lose our loved ones and He hasn't changed. He cares about you and your loved one who has passed away, or who is right now **“walking through the valley of the shadow of death.” Ps 23.**

“Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” ” John 11:21

At death, we blame someone, often ourselves. Many times we blame the person who died. But above all we blame God, and we want to know why especially if the death is premature. It is part of the grief process, and God understands our questions and even our anger at Him.

“Jesus said to her, “ Your brother will rise again.”

Martha said, “ I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

(John 11: 23-26)

“NEVER DIE?” “What do you mean? Lazarus believed in You and he is dead! I don't understand!” Can you imagine Martha's dilemma?

Albert Barnes explains this statement well. He says, “they shall never come into eternal death...Greek, “Shall by no means die forever.” They won't remain dead forever.

Now let's go back to where Jesus was when He received the message, that Lazarus was sick. After two days, Jesus said,

“Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”

Then His disciples said. “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.

However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead!” ” (John 11: 11-14)

Jesus clearly calls death a sleep, as does the rest of the Bible—God's Holy Word.

But why does God's Word call death a sleep?

Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing.

And they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.

Also, their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished, Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.”

Job 14: 14,21 “If a man dies.....his sons come to honour, and he does not know it; they are brought low, and he does not perceive it.”

Death is likened to a deep sleep, because they know nothing in death—absolutely nothing! You and I know what it's like. You lay your head on the pillow and the next thing you know the old alarm clock is ringing in your ear. When you sleep well, you have no sense of time or of anything that is going on around you. You know nothing. That's why criminals usually work in the night-- when people are asleep or 'dead to the world' as we often say!

The Bible says death is like that! But someone says, "Don't our loved ones go to heaven at death?"

Now that would be a comforting thought, but let us see what the Bible says about our loved ones.

In **Psalm 115:17** we read:

"The dead do not praise the LORD, nor any who go down into silence."

When Peter was preaching on the Day of Pentecost, notice carefully what he said:

"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." Acts 2:29

You can still visit the tomb of David in Jerusalem today.

Let me ask a question of you. How many of you think David will be in heaven?

Now I know David did some very bad things, but the Bible says he repented and was forgiven by God's amazing Grace and the New Testament Book of Hebrews tells us he was one of the great heroes of faith.

But notice what Peter added: **"For David did NOT ascend into the heavens..." Acts 2:34.**

Clearly, even in Peter's time, David was not yet in heaven!

Let's go to the 11th chapter of Hebrews, which is called the Faith Chapter. It mentions all the great people of faith like Abel, Noah, and Abraham. Speaking of all these people the Bible says:

"But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country... for He has prepared a city for them.....and all these ...did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us." Hebrews 11: 16, 39.

Clearly, none of them are in heaven at this point in time. They are all waiting till we all go there together.

This agrees with the rest of Scripture. Job said:

"So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake, nor be roused from their sleep." Job 14: 12

So when will they wake up from their sleep? The apostle Paul gives us the answer in **1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18**

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.....For the Lord Himself shall 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. 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.”

How their hearts must have been comforted with these words!

They would see their loved ones again, for they will be sleeping till Jesus awakes them from their sleep when He returns.

What a glorious and fantastic day that will be when Jesus returns. That is when the dead will be woken out of their sleep! Just imagine the re-unions that will take place on that day!

The Second Coming of Jesus is the day to wake those who sleep in Jesus to life, according to God's Holy Word. That is the day the faithful will meet Jesus, with their loved ones who may be still living when He returns.

According to the Bible, the dead friends of Jesus do NOT meet Him at death.

They meet Him WITH their loved ones, who may still be alive WHEN He returns, NOT before. There is no point in Paul telling them they will meet Jesus when He returns, if they have already met Him in heaven at death!

This is why Paul said to comfort each other with THESE words; not by saying the dead are now with the Lord in heaven.

Isn't it more comforting to think of us all going to meet Jesus together, rather than some of us being down here, and some of us being up there watching us getting into all sorts of difficulties?

But someone says, “Isn't the soul immortal?”

The words **SOUL** and **SPIRIT** are mentioned around 1600 times in the Bible, **but NEVER as immortal!**

There is no such thing in the Bible as an “immortal soul”. **Only God is immortal!**

Speaking of God, Paul declared,

“.....He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Who alone has immortality.....” 1Timothy 6: 15,16. Notice the word “ALONE”. **Only God has immortality! No one else has it yet!**

This brings us to a very important question---**What is a soul?**

We need to go back to the book of beginnings—Genesis—to the creation of humans. Let's look at the King James Version:

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.”

To simplify the action let's do some simple math:

Dust of the ground + Breath of Life from God = Living Soul.

Notice that man BECAME a Living Soul. God did NOT put a Soul IN man; rather he BECAME a living soul.

Dust plus Breath makes a Living Soul, or a Living Being as it says in the NKJV. Or, the Elements of the earth plus Breath of Life from God make a Living Being.

The Bible informs us that there is no soul without a body—the elements. A Living Soul simply means a Living Being—a Living Person.

Thus, another word for “soul” in the Bible is “person” or “life”.

Notice how the following verse in Ezekiel 18: 4 NKJV puts it:

“The soul who sins shall die.”

The Good News translation says: **“The person** who sins is the one who will die.”

The Living Bible translation says: “ It is for **a man’s** own sins that he will die.”

The soul is the entire person, and must have a body to be a soul, according to God’s Word. God did not put a soul IN man—he BECAME a soul.

Now death is creation in reverse.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God Who gave it.”

The word translated “spirit” is from the Hebrew “*ruaach*” which means “breath” or “wind”. This is brought out in the Good News Bible translation of this verse:

“Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life will go back to God, Who gave it to us.” (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

In the Bible the Spirit and Soul are different—they are not the same thing.

Remember we saw that God BREATHED Breath or Spirit Into Man, and man BECAME a Living Soul or Person. At death the body or person goes back to dust. The spirit or breath of life from God, goes back to God.

Men of science today can replicate a wheat seed so that it is identical with its look alike, but there is a huge difference between the two. Plant both seeds, and only one will grow—the one which had LIFE from God embedded in it. Scientists cannot supply that LIFE FORCE which only comes from the Creator. He alone is able to give Life to all his Creation. When we lose that life force at death, we are truly DEAD!

The Bible clearly shows that Breath and the Spirit are the same thing.

In the NKJV translation **Job 27: 3** says, **“As long as my breath is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils....”**

In the KJV it reads, **“As long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils....” (Job 27:3)**

The reason for this is that the Hebrew word here—*ruaach*—means both breath and spirit. So you can see that breath and spirit are the same. No one believes that some ghostly thing lives in our noses. No, the “spirit” here means “breath”, “wind”, or “air”.

Just as God breathed spirit or breath, (energy of life), into man at creation, so it returns to Him at death.

This is why the New Testament says, **“For as the body without the spirit is dead....” James 2:26**

So James is saying, a living person minus the spirit is a corpse. Mathematically it can be expressed as a simple equation: **body - breath = dead corpse.**

It can be illustrated also using a light bulb. Pass electricity through it and we have light. Take away that energy and the light goes out!

The bulb is like the Body. Add breath or Energy from God, and you have a Living Person or Light. Take away the Energy from God, and all you have left is a bulb. The light has gone out.

The person ceases to exist.

Well, will we ever be immortal? Absolutely, if we are faithful!

The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 15:52-54 “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality....then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

You will notice that Immortality is “PUT ON” at Christ’s return—NOT before!

So where did the teaching of the immortal soul come from, and how did it become part of so-called Christianity?

Tertullian, one of the early church fathers living after the time of the Bible, between 160-225AD said,

“I may use, therefore, the opinion of PLATO, when he declares, ‘Every soul is immortal.’”

(Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Chapter III; Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol III*, p. 202) So....it came from Plato, who was a Pagan Greek Philosopher. Pagan Greek Philosophy taught that the soul is immortal.

The body they said was like a house. At death the body became crumbled, allowing the spirit or soul to leave the body and go elsewhere.

The Word of God—the Bible, reveals that the real origins of this belief came from a deceiving serpent at the beginning of this world. Satan is the Father of Lies, and it is amazing how so many, even professed Christians, have swallowed his lie, “hook line and sinker!”

When God made man He warned:

“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.” Genesis 2:16.17 In plain English.... **“Adam and Eve, if you eat of this tree, you will die!”**

But in total contradiction to God, Satan through the snake, as a medium, said,

“You will NOT surely die.” Genesis 3:4. And he is still today convincing millions of every culture, this Satanic belief, that something lives on after death—that you really don’t die! Your spirit or soul continues living somewhere! This is nothing other than the spurious lie of the Devil.

So, why did Satan formulate the belief of an immortal soul—a belief that is found globally in nearly every religion—both Christian and Non-Christian?

He deceives to take people to eternal destruction—that is his prime objective. Remember what Jesus said in:

John 8:44 **“Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”**

What about those “out of body experiences”, that so many people have—surely they are real!

Just remember that they contradict this Book, God’s Holy Word, which says,

“For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything.” Ecclesiastes 9:5

Not long ago TIME Magazine ran a feature article on “near death” or “out of body experiences”, and pointed out that near death there are altered states of consciousness, which cause people to hallucinate.

And the BBC News reported on August 23, 2007, that scientists are able to generate “out of body experiences” on people who are very much alive.

Then, what about all those amazing stories of reincarnated lives, where people tell us that in a previous life, they were Mozart or Napoleon Bonaparte or some other person!

Again, just remember that they contradict this Book, the Bible, which says,

“For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing....”Ecclesiastes 9:5

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...”

Hebrews 9:27

We die ONCE according to the Bible. It is totally opposed to the idea of some sort of recycling of the soul.

Here’s a couple of thoughts to set you thinking:

“Is it better to be born twice and die once, or to be born once and die twice!”

Then there is Channelling or Spiritualism! So, what about reports of people seeing or speaking to the dead? It is becoming more and more common every day. What is going on?

Remember that we need to see things as God sees them—to look behind the scenes!

“It is NOT the dead who are communicating with you.”

It may look and sound like your loved one. They may even say things that only you and they know about. But, it is not the dead for the Bible declares categorically,

“For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything. And they have no more reward, for their memory is forgotten.

Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished. Nevermore will they have a share in anything that is done under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 9:5,6

If the dead know nothing, how can they be talking with you? The Bible is clear—they have no more involvement with us who are alive---until Jesus comes!

The precious Word of God helps to protect us from the lies of Satan.

What about the story Jesus told of the Rich Man and Lazarus? Doesn’t that show we go to heaven or hell when we die?

Even in Jesus’ day Satan had brought in so many lies over that first 4000 years. Paganism was rife in many areas of the world, and the Jews had embraced a number of these pagan ideas, and Jesus used one of these prevailing beliefs to show the Truth that riches cannot earn you a ticket to heaven, and that when a person dies their opportunity for salvation has passed.

Jesus framed His parable so as to teach important Truths, through their preconceived opinions. Many of the Jews believed the heathen idea of a conscious state of man in death. This is quite contrary to the teaching of Scripture as we have already seen.

The story is found in **Luke 16: 19-31.**

We need to answer some very important questions here:

1. Was the poor beggar with all his rags and sores literally carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom? **That is not taught in Scripture!**
2. Did the rich man come back to life after he was dead and buried in hell to be able to speak to God? **Scripture does NOT support this idea.**

3. Does this story negate all the rest of Scripture? **Definitely not. It was a simple story showing the foolishness and error of such beliefs.**

There were many other pagan ideas and beliefs prevalent as well.

Another prevailing lie of the day was espoused even by a sect of the Jewish Leaders called the Sadducees, who believed that there would be NO RESURRECTION! That's why they were Sad You See!

And what about haunted houses?

Again, it is NOT the dead, for the Bible clearly says,

“So he who goes down to the grave does not come up. He shall never return to his house, nor shall his place know him anymore.” Job 7: 9,10

So whoever it is, the Bible says clearly, **IT IS NOT THE DEAD!** Well, who is it?

Have you noticed that there is real enmity between Christ and Satan. It has been going on since there was war in heaven. See Revelation 12. The Bible reveals a Final Battle for Global Worship or Allegiance.

The Bible also reveals those who are doing these things.

“For they are the spirits of demons, performing signs....” Revelation 16:14

This is why the Bible warns us not to try to contact the dead.

“There shall not be found among you anyone who...practices witchcraft...or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD....” Deuteronomy 18: 10-12

Why does the Bible warn us this way?

Because, when we do these things, we are really contacting evil spirits or Satan and his angels who were cast out of heaven when he rebelled against God. Those who do these things are really contacting God's enemies, and as the saying goes, “You can't have your bottom on two horses at the same time!”

How diabolical is the Devil? At our weakest and most vulnerable times in life—the death of a loved one—he moves in with his lies. It doesn't get more despicable than that!

Let's go back to John 11. And so, four days too late Jesus walked into the town of Bethany.

They took Him to the tomb and He said **“Roll away the stone!”**

Standing in front of the tomb, He called out, **“Lazarus, come forth!”**

Notice He did not say, Lazarus come down or Lazarus come up!

Lazarus came forth out of the tomb, because Jesus has Power over Death.

I often wonder why Jesus addressed Lazarus personally. Why didn't He just say “Come forth!”? Someone has suggested that if He had just said “Come forth!” all those who had ever lived would have arisen. He will keep that command for His return, and what a day that will be, when all that are in the graves shall hear His Voice and shall arise.

Matthew 24: 30, 31 “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

1Thess. 4:16, 17 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Rev 20:13 “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

With Lazarus, dead for four days, and his body already decomposing, we see in reality, a re-play of Adam’s Creation.

Where was the dust of the earth? In the tomb!

Where was the Breath of Life? In Jesus!

Remember Jesus’ Words,

“I am the resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” John 11:35

Right there, in those words of hope, are the **TWO** necessary ingredients for having Life after Death.

- 1. There must be a Resurrection.**
- 2. There must be a Belief in Jesus.**

Because Lazarus had believed in Jesus, at Jesus’ voice the two came together—the Life or Spirit or Breath that is in Jesus our Creator, and the decomposing body of Lazarus in the tomb—and Lazarus came to life—a living soul!

There is no life after death without a Resurrection at Christ’s return, and to live after death one must believe in Jesus.

If we die believing in Jesus, we too, like Lazarus, will rise from the dead when Jesus comes again and calls us to come forth.

And what is even better, it will be a life with Jesus forever.

The thief on the cross, believed in Him. He said,

“Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” Luke 23:42

And Jesus responded,

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Luke 23:43

What is going on here?? It looks as if the thief would be in Paradise that very day! Does it undo everything we have learnt so far?

What you may not realize is that when the Bible was written, there were no punctuation marks in it. There weren’t even any spaces between the words if you check on some of the old manuscripts of the Bible. Punctuation marks were placed there at a later time, and those who did it got it wrong in this instance.

To be in harmony with the rest of Scripture it should read:

“Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise.” Luke 23:43.

Jesus was saying to him, ‘Today, when all looks lost for you and Me, Today, I am telling you, you will be with Me in Paradise.’

How do we know this? Because Jesus did not go to Paradise that day. Even on the resurrection morning, very early Sunday, Jesus told Mary not to touch Him as He had not yet ascended to the Father in heaven.

What an incredible difference a bit of punctuation can make!

A story is told of a lady on holiday in Europe from America many years ago. She saw a lovely fur coat, that she took a fancy to, and sent a telegram to her husband asking if she could buy it as it was quite expensive.

The husband sent her his reply:

NO PRICE TOO DEAR.

The wife thought, "Isn't he sweet!" and bought the coat.

When she came home wearing the expensive fur coat, the husband was quite surprised to put it mildly.

"Didn't I send you a telegram saying, 'NO. PRICE TOO DEAR.'"

Somehow the full stop had got lost in sending the telegram.

It just goes to show how important punctuation can be.

Wellington had fought Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo.

The message of the outcome of the battle was taken across the English Channel and was relayed to London by Semaphore which was a method used in those days of sending messages by the waving of flags.

The message was being sent: "WELLINGTON DEFEATED..." when an English fog interrupted the full message, and those two words were sent on as the full message to London. Everyone thought Wellington had been defeated. Gloom settled over London with everyone believing Napoleon had won.

However, as the sun rose later in the day dispersing the fog, the message was able to be completed:

"WELLINGTON DEFEATED THE ENEMY!"

What a difference the full message made! Now gloom was turned into joy!

Two thousand years ago on that fearful Friday, it looked like the message was....

"JESUS DEFEATED...."

But on Sunday morning, when Jesus came forth from the tomb triumphant, the message was very clear!

"JESUS DEFEATED DEATH."

And the Good News is: Jesus is coming again to raise His Faithful people who have died, to LIFE ETERNAL, and His faithful ones who are alive and remain will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! See 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58.

Is there life after death? There is indeed for those who have given their lives and hearts to Jesus, and when He returns as King of Kings, with the keys of Hell and Death, they will awake from sleep, and experience the wonderful transformation as described in Corinthians. Then will be brought to pass the saying, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

Have you put your trust in Jesus? Have you given Him your heart and life, so that He can make you immortal when He returns?

What a wonderful loving God we serve! All praise and adoration to His Name!

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