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Where are the Dead?

compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl 2002

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Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted

SATAN'S LIE vs. CHRIST'S PROMISE

John 11:25-26 "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.](#)'"

According to Jesus, *only* those who believe in Him, will "never die." Everyone else *will* die. We know that believers as well as unbelievers die physical death. Jesus must be talking about a **different type of death** - "the second death." We will address this type of death in our next study, "Hell - What it's NOT."

Thousands of believers have died. They died physically - but did they *really* die? What is death anyway? Many, of course, have taught that human beings only *seem* to die. The physical body dies, while the soul lives on.

Genesis 3:4 "Then **the serpent** said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'"

The idea - that an essential mind, essence, soul or spirit of man goes immediately on to another conscious existence at death, has been taught by mystic religions from the beginning of recorded history.

Each student must search the Scriptures and consider all of the evidence. Where does the weight of the evidence fall? I personally, do NOT believe this is a "salvation issue" (an issue that would be the sole cause for one to gain or lose salvation). I do believe that one's personal relationship with God our Father, will be strongly affected by the belief one holds, concerning man's state in death. I will explain.

If man was created with an immortal nature, **then** the soul or spirit *must* go somewhere at death. It must go to Heaven, to Hell, to Purgatory, wander the earth as a disembodied spirit, or join the “collective consciousness” as some religions teach.

The traditional teaching of eternal torment in a place created by God for that purpose, makes God our Father out to be a monster whose wrath is never appeased. How could I love and completely trust, a vindictive monster?

And what about those who were **not able to choose** Christ, either because they were too young, were mentally handicapped, or were simply ignorant of the God of the Bible. Where do their spirits go? If they are consigned to Hell simply because they died before baptism, or before missionaries could reach them, what does that say about God’s justice?

On the other hand, if death is simply an unconscious “sleep” - a suspended animation (with God retaining a ‘memory’ of each person, for resurrection at a later time) then **there is no need for a conscious disembodied soul to go anywhere**. “Rest in Peace” would really mean what it says, on those gravestones.

JESUS CALLED DEATH A SLEEP

John 11:11-13 “Lazarus is [sleeping](#).”

Matthew 9:18, 24 “. . . the girl is not dead, but [sleeping](#).”

*Jesus did not consider physical death to be “death” at all - simply a sleep.
The “second death” - from which there is no resurrection - that is final death.*

*The “second death” is covered separately in the study,
[“Final Judgment - Lake of Fire.”](#)*

OTHERS - REFERRED TO DEATH AS SLEEP

LUKE

Acts 7:60 Stephen “fell [asleep](#).” Acts 13:36 David “fell [asleep](#).”

PAUL

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 “those who are [asleep](#)”

1 Corinthians 15:6,18 “some have fallen [asleep](#)”

1 Corinthians 11:30 “many are weak and sick among you, and many [sleep](#)”

DAVID – DANIEL – JOB - JEREMIAH

Psalm 13:3 “lest I sleep the **sleep** of death”

Daniel 12:2 “them that **sleep** in the dust”

Job 3:13 “then I should have **slept**”

Job 14:12 “nor be raised out of their **sleep**”

Jeremiah 51:39 “and **sleep a perpetual sleep**”

Many seem to find comfort in the thought that a loved one is in heaven, assuming of course, that if they are in heaven, they are happy. But what if your deceased loved one did not believe in Christ? Would you suffer constantly, thinking of your son or daughter in Hell? Jesus said, “Few there be that find it” - the way to God. That means the great mass of humanity is suffering in Hell. Right? You can't have that happy thought of a loved one in Heaven, without the unhappy thought of others suffering in Hell. That is, IF the soul consciously survives the death of the body.

Personally, I believe the LORD has chosen the most simple, kind way for us to pass the time from death to the resurrection -- asleep. Have you ever had **an anesthetic** for an operation? You didn't dream. You didn't feel anything. Remember how it seemed like only a moment before you were waking up in the recovery room? You were not conscious of the passage of any time. What if death could be like that? You fall asleep one moment, and the next moment you hear His voice. It's over!! It's the resurrection, the return of Christ in glory, the end of this age.

NOTE: How many times have you seen human beings portrayed in sustained hibernation for long space flights? Our God it seems, was way ahead of Star Trek.

If I could choose, I would want death to be like that - a special sleep. I believe this is what the Bible teaches.

NO SUCH PHRASE

In the Bible, the two words - **immortal and soul** - are NOT used together!
There is no such expression. There is no entity called the “immortal soul.”

SEEK FOR IMMORTALITY

1 Timothy 6:13-16 God “alone has immortality.” *Angels it seems - can die.*

Romans 2:7 “. . . seek for immortality.”

Why would we be told to seek for something that we all naturally possess?

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IMMORTALITY IS THE REWARD

John 6:40 “everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, [may have eternal life](#)”

Matthew 7:14 “Because narrow is the gate and difficult is [the way which leads to life](#), and [there are few who find it.](#)”

Romans 2:7 “[To those](#) who by persistence in doing good, seek . . . immortality, [He will give eternal life](#)” (NIV).

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death,
but [the gift of God is eternal life](#) in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1 John 5:11 “And this is the testimony: that [God has given us eternal life](#), and [this life is in His Son.](#)”

John 10:28 “And [I give them eternal life](#), and [they shall never perish](#); neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

WHEN ARE WE MADE IMMORTAL?

John 6:40 “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, [may have eternal life](#); and I myself will raise him up [at the last day.](#)”

John 14:3 “I will [come again](#) and [receive you](#) unto myself.”

2 Thessalonians 2:1 We are “[gathered together to Him](#)”
at “[the coming](#) of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Doesn't sound like we go to be with Him immediately after we die.

John 6:39 “[at the last day](#)”

John 6:44 “I will raise him up at [the last day.](#)”

John 6:54 “I will raise him up at [the last day.](#)”

John 11:24 Martha said to Christ concerning her brother Lazarus:

“I know that [he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.](#)”

AT THE LAST TRUMPET

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 shall be changed” (NAS).

The dead will be raised, and the living will be changed at the same event - on the day that Jesus returns in glory - the last day of this age.

1 Thessalonians 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 which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” *This is one event!*

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

The heavens pass away at the Glorious Return of Christ (2Peter 3:10).

WHEN WILL THE LAST TRUMPET SOUND?

Which is the last trumpet? Answer: The 7th Trumpet - Revelation 15:11-18.

This Trumpet announces the Glorious Return of Christ to our world. The dead will be resurrected into immortal spiritual bodies, and those still alive at that day, will be “changed” so they also receive new spiritual bodies.

Notice in verse 18, that when the 7th Trumpet sounds it is time to “reward Your servants.” Eternal life is the reward. We must “wait” for that day. Yes. There are a few human beings already in Heaven. (See pg 12.) Those few do not negate the words of Paul, John, Job, David and Solomon, that most of us will have to “wait” for Christ’s return.

Philippians 3:20-21 “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body . . .”

2 Timothy 4:8 [Paul writing] “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

WHERE ARE THE DEAD WHEN THEY HEAR THE LORD'S VOICE?

John 5:28-29 "The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice, and shall come forth."

Daniel 12:2 "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake." NIV

Multitudes have to wake up, from sleep. Sleeping people are not conscious of their surroundings. They do not interact with their surroundings. Between physical death and resurrection, we sleep.

WHAT WILL OUR BODY BE LIKE - AT THE RESURRECTION?

Luke 24:39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

Jesus' body was made up of "flesh and bones" [not blood] after His resurrection. Paul wrote, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:50 NAS). Blood is the life of the mortal, earthly, perishable "body" (Deut. 12:23).

Philippians 3:21 Christ ". . . will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body . . ."

Our body will be like His resurrected body! After the resurrection, Christ appeared in the upper room - without entering through the door. He appeared physical - as "flesh" - when in the physical dimension. It seems the spiritual body can pass back and forth between the physical dimension and the spiritual/heavenly dimension. We are promised that when we are "changed," we will be like Him. We will have bodies - "spiritual" bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:44 "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

Psalms 17:15 David said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness."

Job 19:26 "in my flesh shall I see God." KJV

1 Corinthians 15:49 "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."

BODY AND SPIRIT

James 2:26 “The body without the spirit is dead.”

*Each living person has a **physical body** & **the spirit**. The spirit of God gives life to the body, and continues life within the body. At death each part is returned to its source. The physical body returns to the dust, and the spirit returns to God, who gave it.*

THE PHYSICAL BODY

Genesis 2:7 “God formed man of the dust of the ground . . .”

Genesis 3:19 [God speaking] “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

*YOU came from dust. **YOU are dust**. YOU will return to dust.
NOT - Part of you will return to dust, while the other part lives on in Heaven or in Hell.*

*Whether it becomes fish food, is burned in fire, or is wrapped in satin and encased in marble, **it really does NOT MATTER what happens to the body after death**. It will return to the elements. Jesus will give us a new “spiritual body” when He returns.*

THE SPIRIT RETURNS TO GOD

Doesn't that mean we go straight to Heaven - or Hell?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then the dust [body] will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

According to this verse, “the spirit” returns to God regardless of the character of the person to whom it was given! Upright or evil, ignorant or indifferent - the spirit returns to God.

*Question: If the “spirit” is not the person,
then what is the spirit that will return to God?*

THE SPIRIT

Job 33:4 “The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

Genesis 2:7 “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,
and man became a living soul.”

Job 27:3 “As long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils.”

Today we monitor the heart beat and the electrical activity in the brain, to determine if a human being is alive. The ancients watched the breathing. They equated breathing with life - and with the presence of the spirit.

Isaiah 42:5 “God . . . who gives breath (‘*neshamah*’) to the people on it, and spirit (‘*ruwach*’) to those who walk on it:”

Two Hebrew words are translated “spirit” in the Old Testament:

1. “neshamah” (breath or wind #05397)
2. “ruwach” (of God, breath, wind, temper, mind, heart #07307).

The breath or wind, was the unseen power or life force - the spirit of God - the “breath of the Almighty.”

In the New Testament the word translated as ‘spirit’, is the Greek ‘*pneuma*’, also meaning breath or wind. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, it came as a “rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2).

In another scene, Jesus “breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy spirit” (John 20:22). The same spirit which was breathed into Adam, giving him life, was breathed upon the disciples, giving them power.

It is God’s own spirit, HIS breath - which returns to HIM at the death of the body.

WHAT THEN, IS “A LIVING SOUL?”

Body + Breath = a breather

Body + Spirit = a living soul

Body + Spirit = a living person

Genesis 2:7 “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

God breathed (spirit - ‘*neshamah*’) into the nostrils of Adam, and he became ‘a breather.’

The Hebrew word ‘*nephesh*’ (‘*psuche*’ in the Greek) has been translated variously as ‘person’, ‘living being’, ‘one who breathes’, ‘breather’ or ‘soul’ (Strong’s #05315). The problem arises because ‘*nephesh*’ has also been translated as ‘self’, ‘life’, ‘heart’, ‘desire,’ or ‘mind’.

An absolute, standard - consistent definition of the Hebrew “nephesh” just isn’t there. We must study context, and consider words with clearer standard definition. We must rely upon the weight of evidence. If a text can be understood in more than one way, depending upon the doctrinal leanings of the reader - if word usage or context is ambiguous, then the text should not be used to prove a doctrine. Our following text is a good example.

CLOTHED *or* NAKED

2 Corinthians 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, shall 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**, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. 6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the (physical) body we are absent from (the immediate presence of) 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” (NAS).

MORTAL BODY	NEW SPIRITUAL BODY	NO “BODY”
“earthly <u>tent</u> ” “our <u>house</u> ”	“a <u>building</u> from God” “a <u>house</u> not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”	
“in this <u>house</u> we groan, longing to be” ---➡	“further clothed ” “ clothed with our <u>habitation</u> from heaven” “What is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”	“being clothed we shall not be found naked ”
“at home in the body” we are “absent from the Lord”	“ absent from the (physical) body ” we will be “present with the Lord”	“ unclothed ”

To be “naked” (without a “house”) is to be dead.

To function as a living person, one must be “clothed” with a body.

Those who teach the immortality of the conscious soul, jump straight from the old house (*physical body*) to the new house (*immortal spiritual body*). They don't mention **the state in between - the state of nakedness - the absence of any body**. Without a body, one is not alive - not conscious or functioning. That is why Paul wrote, “we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

*The “mortal” is NOT “swallowed” by the immortal
UNTIL the person is ‘clothed’ with his new “spiritual body.”*

ABSENT FROM THE BODY - in a vision

2 Corinthians 12:2-5 “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know-- God knows. 3 And I know that this man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- 4 was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. 5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.” (NIV)

Most believe that Paul was speaking of himself. In a vision, he was transported into Heaven. He didn't die. He later wrote about his experience. Daniel the prophet, while in vision, was transported to other locations (in his mind) while his body lay asleep on his bed (Dan. 7:1, Dan. 8:1-2).

THE SPIRITUAL BODY

1 Corinthians 15:44 “It is sown a **natural body**, it is raised a **spiritual body**. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

Job 19:26 “And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God.”

Job expects to have a new body when he meets the Lord, even if he dies first. He doesn't expect it right away, because he 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). The “heavens” pass away at the Glorious Return of Christ (Rev. 6:14, Isa. 43:4, 2Pet. 3:10).

Luke 24:39 [Jesus speaking post resurrection] “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”

*The Lord Jesus “will transform our lowly **body** that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21).*

Romans 8:22,23 “. . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our **body**.”

If we are not fully adopted into the family of God until the redemption of our bodies, then how can we be adopted as disembodied spirits immediately at death?

Philippians 1:21-24 [Paraphrase] Paul said that he desired most of all “to be with Christ.” “To die is gain” he wrote. He was not afraid to die, because he knew that it would seem to him only a moment of sleep, and he would wake again at the resurrection. But he said, “To remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” He would labor on in his tired mortal body as long as God willed it.

Paul wants to be “with the LORD.” He wants the new spiritual body. He doesn’t want to be dead, but he recognizes that death will be the case for many. He refers to them as “fallen asleep” (1Cor. 15:6).

BODIES OF SAINTS

Genesis 5:24 Enoch’s body was never found after he was translated to heaven without seeing death (Heb. 11:5).

2 Kings 2:11,16-17 Elijah went up in a fiery chariot to heaven. (The empty shell of his body didn’t fall back to earth.)

Elijah was a TYPE (a living symbol) of those who will be living to see Christ come - who will be translated without seeing death. Their bodies will be “changed” - not shed.

Moses was a TYPE of those who will be resurrected when Christ returns. (They will receive new bodies.) On the Mount of Transfiguration Christ stood with Moses and Elijah (Mark 9:2-4). Elijah plus Moses made a miniature representation of His coming kingdom - some resurrected, and others translated without seeing death.

Jude 9 Michael contended with Satan for the [body](#) of Moses.

If Moses (as spirit) had already gone to Heaven, why this conflict over possession of the his corpse? Answer: Because the Son of God wanted to resurrect Moses, and to take him to Heaven. Satan wanted Moses to stay dead. At this point in time, no person had ever been resurrected.

Romans 5:14 “. . . [death reigned from Adam to Moses.](#)”

Something involving the reign of death - changed with Moses.

Some object to this belief because Jesus had not yet died on the cross. The penalty for sins had not yet been paid. True. But to God, who sees the future, it was as if the payment had already been made.

AN OBJECTION ANSWERED

Some believe that Moses was not raised from the dead. They say that the LORD (or Joshua) just buried Moses in a hidden place (*Deut. 34:5-6*) so that the Children of Israel would not turn his burial place into a Shrine and worship the dead. Maybe. **What changed then, concerning the reign of death, at Moses?** Every person who had died up to Moses - stayed dead.

Fourteen hundred years later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, [Moses appeared with Elijah, talking with Christ.](#) The account is in Matthew Cpt 17, and Mark Cpt 9.

It was FORBIDDEN for any man of Israel to speak with ‘the dead.’ It was a death penalty offense according to the Torah. No wonder Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen! They Jews would have stoned Jesus - just for this seeming violation of Torah.

Some versions quote Jesus as saying, “Tell no man the vision”. Others translate simply, “Tell no one what you have seen.”

Did Jesus sin? Did He violate a Torah command? Did He speak with the dead?

Was this a “vision” only,

OR - were Moses and Elijah actually alive - not dead?

If this was just a “vision”, then why did Jesus take **3 witnesses** with Him? Peter, James, and John all “saw” what took place. (See 2 Cor. 3:1; Matt. 18:16, 1 Timothy 5:19, and Hebrews 10:28 for examples of this principle of “witnesses”.) I’ve never read of multiple persons, receiving the exact same vision, at the exact same time. Also, I know of no “vision” recorded in Scripture, in which the recipient talked with a dead person.

Peter, James and John would have rejected Jesus immediately, if they believed that He was speaking with the dead. They believed that Elijah and Moses were REAL, and ALIVE. Peter wanted to build tabernacles (houses) for them.

Jesus told them not to tell anyone about what they had seen, until He was himself risen:

1. It could cause many to turn away from Him. 2. It would give the authorities the grounds they were seeking, to put Him to death, along with the three disciples. 3. Word of such an appearance would have confused the people, concerning the commands of God forbidding any interaction with the dead.

2 Peter 1:16-18 “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables . . . but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (Matthew 17:1-9).

This is a first person witness statement.

THE SPRING HARVEST RESURRECTION

Matthew 27:52-53 When Jesus rose from the dead, Matthew says that many other saints were also raised. These saints were resurrected with bodies that could be seen because they “appeared to many”.

Christ, speaking through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah says of this resurrection, “together with my dead body shall they arise” (Isa. 26:19). **They were resurrected**, then later ascended with Jesus when He returned to the Father’s right hand. **They are now alive, in Heaven.**

I believe that Jesus presented these resurrected saints to His Father, as the Spring harvest. He was himself the “Firstfruits” offering of that harvest. These saints are mentioned in Revelation 4:4 and 5:8-10, as the 24 Elders “redeemed from among men.” There will yet be a greater harvest - the Summer Harvest, when Jesus returns to raise “the dead in Christ.”

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What's it like - to be dead?

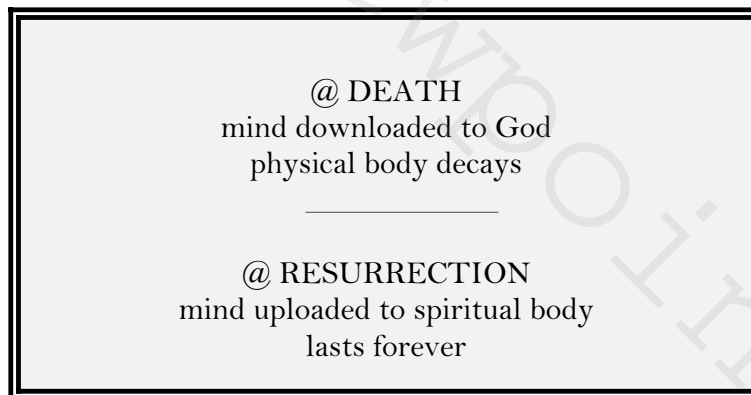
WHAT IS LEFT - SO THAT A PERSON CAN BE RESURRECTED?

A friend shared this concept with me, and she could not remember where she heard it, so please forgive me if I'm quoting without giving credit. Here goes.

As the spirit of God flows through - lives in, each human being during his lifetime, it is changed or imprinted, by that interaction, as if God shares our life. When the spirit returns to God at the death of the body, **the LORD retains a "memory" from that person's brain - of every experience and thought**. At the resurrection, Christ will form a new body for that individual. Then as God's spirit flows through that new body, God will fill the new "brain" with the mind He has retained (saved).

LIKE A COMPUTER - AND A MEMORY STICK

I will use a familiar object - **a computer** - to illustrate. Imagine a heavenly version of a **memory stick**. At the moment of death the LORD downloads of all the information from my mind/memory. At the resurrection, He will simply restore (upload) all of that information into my new brain, and I will be up and running in my new "spiritual body" - restored better than ever, without compromising my free will. In between - while I'm dead, I'm like a memory stick without a computer. I cannot function.



Our brains are wonderfully created **bio-computers**. When the LORD wanted to disrupt the building of the Tower, He simply "uploaded a language program," and instantly the builders of Babel were speaking different languages (*Genesis Cpt 11*). On the Day of Pentecost, when the disciples began to preach in Aramaic with a Galilean dialect, Jews from widely different regions "heard" them speak - each in the language of his own residence location (*Acts 2:6,8,11*). We today, are familiar with electronic language translators. The LORD just used a more sophisticated version.

NOTE: The LORD wanted the people to scatter over the earth after the flood, to prevent their domination by one ruler or powerful group. They ignored His command and remained together in one geographical area. So He scattered them, by confusing their language (Genesis Cpt 11).

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING

Psalm 146:4 “His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day [his thoughts perish.](#)”

Ecclesiastes 9:5,6,10 “For the living know that they shall die, but [the dead know nothing.](#) Their love, their hate, their envy, is perished.”

Job 3:11,13,17,18,19 “Why did I not die at birth?” “. . . For now I would have lain still and been quiet, [I would have been asleep](#); Then I would have been at rest . . . There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they do not hear the voice of the oppressor . . .”

The “prisoners” of death all sleep together, in the same place - in the dust. Not hearing, not seeing, just sleeping together until the Glorious Return when Christ will wake the dead. “Multitudes of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake” (Daniel 12:2).

CAN THE DEAD COMMUNICATE - WITH THE LIVING?

If the dead are sleeping, with all conscious thought suspended, then how can they communicate with the living?

Stories of angry ghosts are abundant, but the Bible does not support the idea that these spirits are the departed dead. They are Satan and his angels, who seek to deceive men.

Let's address some of the objections to death as sleep.

DIDN'T SAUL SPEAK WITH THE SPIRIT OF SAMUEL?

The Story is found in 1 Samuel Chapter 28.

First: God had commanded, “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them to be defiled by them” (*Lev. 19:31*). “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death” (*Deut. 18:9-12*). “There shall not be found among you one who conjures up spells or a medium, or a spiritist or one who calls up the dead” (*1 Sam. 28:7*). A man or a woman who claimed to communicate with the dead, was to be stoned to death (*Leviticus 20:27*).

NOTE: The above verses tell us how very serious a thing it is - to made contact with the dead. God absolutely forbade this practice. Why? Because the one who thinks that he has made contact with a dead person, is actually communicating with Satan or with one of his evil angels. The Harry Potter series is very popular. Godly parents must understand that these stories of spells and wizards are preparing a generation for deception.

Second: God had departed from Saul and **would not communicate with him** through any living prophet. Why would He then allow a “visitation” with Samuel, facilitated by a witch? (*1 Sam. 28:6,15*).

Third: Samuel was supposedly “brought up”- “out of the earth” during the seance, and was described by the witch as an “old man.” Can any witch cause a saint of God to appear at her bidding? And is this how the saints look - old?

Fourth: **God punished Saul with death**, for his action in “asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it” (*1 Chr. 10:13,14*).

The “familiar spirit” and apparition, was most likely Satan - who will certainly use deceptions of this sort in the last days!

This is the problem I have with **prayers to saints** - like Mary, or St. Christopher, or Joseph. **They are DEAD!** Therefore it is against the Law of God to speak to them, or with them.

God’s Law forbids communication with dead people.

Praying to Dead Saints is therefore a violation of God’s Law.

AREN'T THERE HUMAN BEINGS ALIVE IN HEAVEN NOW?
ANSWER: YES!

Genesis 5:24 [Enoch](#) was “translated that he should not see death” (*Heb. 11:5*).

Jude 9 [Moses](#) was resurrected by Christ just after he died, and was taken to heaven.

2 Kings 2:11 [Elijah](#) “went up” into heaven, without dying first.

Matthew 27:51-52 [Many Saints](#) - were raised by Christ, immediately after He was raised by His Father. These people - from “all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples” ascended with Christ to the throne room of Heaven, where He presented them before His Father’s throne as the “Spring Harvest” (*Rev. 5:8-9*).

All of these people were alive - with new “spiritual” bodies - when taken to Heaven.

Matthew 27:51 says “many bodies” were raised. Why would God raise these saints with bodies, if they had already gone to heaven as spirits?

These saints were the Spring Harvest. Christ was the “Firstfruits” offering of that Spring Harvest (1Cor. 15:20). I personally believe these saints will serve as “witnesses” to the final events of this great war. There are two great “harvests” yet to come (and two great resurrections). The Summer Harvest (the harvest from the “seed” sown after Pentecost), and the Fall Harvest (from “the rest of the dead” who will come to life 1000 years after Jesus returns).

NOTE: God’s Law required that Israelites bring an offering to the LORD, of the first produce from each harvest. That offering was named “the firstfruits.”

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

Jesus said that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive.

Background: The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection - of any kind.

Matthew 22:31-32 [Christ speaking] “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Compare the following verses:

Romans 4:17 [Paul writing] “God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;”

Paul says ‘the dead’ DO NOT EXIST. God speaks of the dead as though they do exist. Why? Answer: Because - to God - they DO EXIST. They are only sleeping. He will wake them presently. We don’t call someone “dead,” who is sleeping. Neither does God.

The “first death” is only a sleep. To God, the dead are still alive, because He can wake them.

To God - only the “second death” in the “lake of fire,” is actual death, because that death is permanent. Those people can never be resurrected again, because God will destroy His own memory of them.

Luke 20:37-38 “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

GATHERED TO YOUR FATHERS

Genesis 49:29 [Jacob speaking] “I am to be gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave . . .”

2 Kings 22:20 [Spoken by the LORD, through the Prophetess Huldah, to King Josiah] “. . . I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace;”

*NOTE: The expression “gathered to your fathers” made reference to **ancient Middle Eastern burial practice**. The body was laid in a family burial cave. After the flesh was consumed away, **the bones were “gathered” and placed together with the bones of “the fathers”** in the same tomb. In the time of Jesus, bones were “gathered” in special boxes called “ossuaries,” carved from sandstone. All the boxes were kept in the same family tomb.*

continued next page

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

Didn't Jesus tell him that he would be in Paradise that very day?

Luke 23:43 "And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

*First: In the original text there were **no punctuation marks**. The comma was supplied by the translators. Therefore the text could just as easily read; "Assuredly I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise." I'm telling you today (present tense), you will be (future tense) with me in paradise.*

*Second: **Christ himself had not yet gone to Paradise on Sunday morning**. He said to Mary, "I have not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17).*

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS?

Didn't Jesus say that Hell is going on now? (Luke 16:19-31)

Matthew 13:34 "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable." (NIV)

We must remember that this story was a parable! The Jewish people had a long tradition of stories called "Midrash." These stories were handed down through generations. They illustrated or clarified the lessons of Scripture. Everyone understood that these stories were not always to be taken literally. Heaven and Hell are not within shouting distance. People in Heaven cannot see people in Hell suffering.

First: Christ wanted to teach the uselessness of riches to the dead.

Second: Christ was predicting the hardness of the Jewish leaders (represented by the rich man and his brothers). They wouldn't be convinced, even if "one rose from the dead". And - true to the parable, the leaders were not convinced after Lazarus and then Christ Himself "rose from the dead."

The rich Jew pleaded, "Father Abraham, please send someone to **warn my five brothers.**" Judah (father of the Jews) did indeed have five full-blood brothers. They were all sons of Jacob's wife Leah. Their names were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar and Zebulun (Genesis 29-30).

In Jesus's day, Caiaphas (the currently serving High Priest) had 5 brothers-in-law, all of whom sequentially served as High Priest, following their father Annas - the Roman appointee, and head of the Sanhedrin (the high council).

It's no wonder they hated Jesus, with parables like this one!

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS - continued

Third: This parable was a **warning to the Jews**, concerning their true destiny, should they remain racist, arrogant and unrepentant. The “rich man” represented the Jewish leaders who thought themselves “rich” in the things of God. (And they were.) They believed that they would go to the “bosom of Abraham” at death, just because they were Jews - and “righteous” Jews at that. (They got that part wrong.)

The poor beggar Lazarus, sitting outside the gate, represented the Gentiles, who were “outside” of the kingdom, (in the eyes of first century Jews). They were ceremonially “unclean,” and the beggar in the story was covered with sores - making him literally unclean.

Yeshua put a different “twist” on a common parable, and His teaching was in direct opposition to commonly held beliefs of His day. **This parable is about consequences. It is not a detailed description of the afterlife.**

We cannot build a whole doctrine on the use of a word translated as “hell” - located in a parable on an entirely different subject. Hell is NOT an unending place of horrors situated within shouting distance, from a heaven of joy and delights. We go into detail about the concept of “Hell” as understood by first century Jews, and consider how that word got into the Apostolic Writings, in our study titled “Hell - What It’s Not.”

DIDN'T CHRIST PREACH TO SOULS IN HELL?

1 Peter 3:18-20 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the **spirits in prison**, who **formerly** were disobedient, **when** once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

Peter is making the point that the same Spirit did both - 1. raise Christ, and 2. preach through Christ, back in Noah’s day.

How did the Spirit preach through Christ? Answer: The Spirit of the Father lived in His Son from eternity. His Son then spoke through all the prophets He called. He spoke through Noah.

Peter wrote, “the spirit of Christ who was in them” spoke through the Old Testament prophets (1Peter 1:11). Christ preached through Noah, pleading with the people, begging them to get on board the ark.

NOTE: Christ was resurrected by His Father (Rom. 8:11, Gal. 1:1). Which means that God the Father is the Great Spirit who has always communicated with mankind through His Son.

The word “Hell” is NOT in this passage. Peter called the people of Noah’s day “spirits in prison,” because their minds and hearts were “in bondage” to sin and Satan. (Compare Ps. 142:7; Isa. 42:6,7; Isa. 61:1; Lk 4:18.) If we are “set free” by the truth of Christ risen, then were we not once prisoners - slaves to sin and Satan? (See Jn 8:32, Jn 8:36, Rom 6:8, Rom 6:22, Rom 8:2, Gal 5:1.) Satan is the ruler of this world, therefore all who are without Christ, belong to Satan.

WHAT IS THE BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD?

1 Corinthians 15:29 “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?”

This verse has been completely taken out of context, to make it about baptism on behalf of persons who have died.

*Paul begins in verse 20, saying “Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep . . .” He is making a point about the resurrection of Jesus. If that never happened, then **why be baptized “in the name of” a dead man?** It’s rather useless, if he’s still dead. As Paul said, “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1Cor. 15:14).*

DOESN'T PAUL SAY THAT GOD WILL “BRING WITH HIM” - ALL THOSE WHO HAVE DIED?

1 Thessalonians 4:14 “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him all who sleep in Jesus.”

*The Greek word translated here as “bring” (Strong’s #71) has also been translated as “take.” This verse may be saying that God will **take** to heaven with Him, all those who now sleep in Jesus.*

Another possible meaning of this verse is that God will “bring” from the dead, all those who sleep in Jesus - just as He “brought” Jesus “from the dead.” This is the meaning of “brought again from the dead” in Hebrews 13:20. The word is used in the same way in Romans 10:7. “Who will descend into the abyss? (that is to bring Christ up from the dead).”

Read the rest of the passage. The “dead in Christ” are raised from their graves when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” (v.16).

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 “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. 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.”

Some folks read just verse 15, and then say that the dead go to heaven before the living. That’s not what the whole passage is saying. Paul is describing one event.

John 14:1-3 “I will come again, and receive you unto myself;”

1 Corinthians 15:23 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept . . . But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

DIDN'T JESUS SAY THAT WE WILL NEVER DIE?

We have come back to where we began this study.

John 11:26 “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

*There are **TWO TYPES of death** - **physical death** and “**the second death**”. One is permanent - the other is only a “sleep”. Believers will never die the “second death”.*

We will talk about “the second death” in our study:

“Final Judgment - Lake of Fire”.

Revelation 2:11 “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

John 11:25 Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

The one who believes will live again - “at the last day.”

Luke 20:35-36 “Those who are counted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead . . . nor can they die anymore.”

The wicked will die again. They will die the “second death” in the “Lake of Fire”. Please do read or listen to, our next study: “Hell - What it’s Not.”

WHAT ABOUT NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES?

I've been reading about "Near Death Experiences" looking for some reconciliation between those "experiences" and the Bible's clear teaching that physical death is a sleep. J. Steve Miller, in his book "Near-Death Experiences As Evidence for the Existence of God and Heaven" had some very interesting data. **Only 4% of those revived from cardiac arrest, (1 of every 24) reported such an "experience"**. Most saw only a light. The rest "saw" and "heard" nothing. If everyone leaves his body at death, you would think such "near death experience" would be recognized as standard, or at least common.

Another very interesting tidbit reported by Miller, was that the experience of the ND'ers never ended abruptly (as at the moment that their heartbeat was restarted). Every person reported that the conversation or the visual journey ended just as a movie would, not in mid-sentence, not in mid-journey. The "experience" ended as if it was being communicated or streamed.

What I took away from Miller's research was that **NDEs may be very real visions or messages**. Those given by the LORD have changed lives. It may be a special "calling" for those persons. I have personally known two persons who reported such an "experience" during cardiac arrest. Both changed their life course and have remained committed to the LORD. It is also quite possible that some ND visions are generated by the Evil One to deceive. We must go to the Bible for our doctrine.

CONCLUSION

If the state of death is a sleep or suspended animation, with God retaining a perfect "memory" of each person, then no place of punishment is needed for those who refused the LORD.

It is especially important to understand the state of man in death, because Satan will use any misunderstanding to his advantage, to come between us and our Heavenly Father. Satan has portrayed the Father as a cruel tyrant who would cause His own children, wayward as they have been, to be tortured for centuries without end, in a place called "Hell". God is made to seem *worse* than King Nebuchadnezzar, who threw Daniel's three friends into the fire because they refused to worship his likeness.

The concept of "unending conscious torment in fire" has driven many to reject any belief in God. Others have been driven mad with fear. Most are simply confused. How can human beings be expected to believe that "God is love" - and "His mercy endures forever" (*Psalm 106:1, 1John 4:8*) while at the same time they believe that God will allow most of His created children to be tortured without end? Please do read, or listen to our study: "**Hell - What It's Not**".

SUMMARY

In Scripture:

1. God alone possesses immortality. (*1 Timothy 6:13-16*)
2. **Immortality is always presented as God's gift to the redeemed.**
3. The immortal are always portrayed as whole embodied persons
- never as disembodied spirits.
4. **Physical death is presented as sleep.**
5. The dead will sleep until the return of Christ in glory.
6. At the Second Coming, the redeemed (both living and resurrected)
will receive immortal spiritual bodies.
7. At the Second Coming, the wicked will be raised to everlasting contempt (*Daniel 12:2-3*).
They will face judgment and will then die - never to live again.
This subject is covered in our study "**Judgment Day**".

May we be drawn closer to HIM, as we understand more clearly - His plan.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
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*There is an addendum to this study: "**No one has Ascended**," which is a study of Jesus statement in John 3:13.*

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