

Death: Do we go directly to heaven? 1 of 3, (corrected) - 20200725

Hi all,

A topic of great confusion among Christians, and one I get asked frequently, is what happens when a Christian dies. Paul told the Corinthians: "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord", but many listen to other voices who confuse them.

Foundational understanding: Spirits are eternal

"We were subject to the fathers of our flesh who corrected us, shall we not also be corrected by the Father of spirits, and live?" Hebrews 12:9 states the Father is the Creator of spirit-beings. The fathers of our flesh corrected us in our flesh, and the Father of spirits corrects us in our spirit.

The Father of spirits means He is the Creator of spirits angelic and human. Because our Creator is an eternal Spirit, so too are those spirits He creates. We might wonder why Lucifer and his angels weren't simply 'snuffed out' when they rebelled; In part this is because as far as we can tell in scripture, spirits are eternal.

Lucifer didn't want to be in heaven, so a place was prepared*. He wasn't 'snuffed out', the Father of spirits graciously prepared for him another place that gave him what he wanted (and for humans who want the same thing); his own kingdom void of God. *Revelation 12:8, Matthew 25: 41

Judaism has always understood people are eternal

I watched an interview with an Israeli political leader talking about the difference between Judaism and other religions. He explained Judaism is a religion of life for Jews recognize we are made in God's image and likeness, therefore every single human being has what he called, 'the divine light', the 'divine life'. That light, that life must be respected from conception to death, and even upon death the body is treated with honor.

"The rabbis did not begin with the idea of a self who disappears at the moment of death. They held instead that despite the body's demise, the essential person housed in the body still enjoyed some beyond-the-grave existence, so that the proper burial and continued respect for the deceased were required. Funeral ritual is thus preeminently designed as an act of k'vod ha-met, "honoring the dead." From Life Cycles in Jewish and Christian Worship.

Luke 16: 19-31: What Jesus said

Jesus taught me about this passage during my first 'teaching' visitation with Him, on October 1, 1986. It is the story of 2 men who lived, and then died. One was an evil rich man who ignored the beggar daily laid at his door. The other was the beggar, whose name was Lazarus.

Both men died and their bodies buried. The rich man's spirit and soul immediately went to the holding place called hell, and Lazarus went to the holding place called Paradise, also called Abraham's bosom and Captivity - where the righteous dead were held 'captive' for a time until the final sacrifice for sin could be made, and then they could continue into the presence of God.

Jesus said these 2 men continued to live after their bodies had died and were buried. They did not cease to exist nor did they 'sleep'. Wide awake and fully aware in their respective places they remembered each other and their lives on earth, spoke to each other, and retained all their senses. Jesus told me the roots of our physical senses is actually found in our spirit. Their earth-bodies were dead and buried, yet they lived on in the spirit/Spirit realm.

Colossians 1:13 tells us to give thanks to the Father who has taken us out of the kingdom of darkness "and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." We are already citizens of heaven, so we automatically go to our 'home town' or 'home country' when we die.

What Barb's grandmother said

Barb's Mennonite grandmother was nearing 90 years of age and living in a nursing home at that point, having moved from the family farm a year or so earlier. We were talking about the Lord one day and she observed: "Inside myself I still feel like that 17 year old girl who could run through the orchard on the farm." Then she chuckled a bit as she looked at her wheelchair before continuing, "But my body has changed around me."

That her spirit had not changed in 90 years means that her spirit won't change at 100, or 150, or 500 years. If her earth-body had been able to continue, Barb's grandmother would be over 135 years old today - but what she said of herself at 90 would be the same at 35 or 50 or 150 - inside she still felt like that 17 year old girl on the farm. We are eternal, but our body changes around us. We don't need this earth-body to live. We are already in eternity.

So the idea that we die and THEN we go nowhere, is totally false.

The Lord upon death

Consider also the Lord and His experience with death. Did the Lord upon death on the cross that day, simply fall asleep or cease to exist? No. Neither did the thief who repented next to Him:

"Truly I say to you, this day you will be with me in Paradise." Both died and just continued their existence in that realm of the Spirit. We are told Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, and upon His resurrection led Captivity captive to heaven, which is why Paradise is now 'up' as part of heaven.

Now the righteous go directly to Paradise in heaven, as Paul stated in II Corinthians 12: 2, 4: "...caught up to the third heaven...caught up to Paradise..." (In Judaism the air is 1st heaven, space is 2nd heaven, where God lives is 3rd heaven - please don't let anyone make a step by step process of reaching heaven for you - Christ is already in your spirit, you can't get any closer than that. Fad religious formulas only try to improve on Christ in you, and that is futile, if not bordering on blasphemous for a Christian to do so. Christ in you the hope of glory. Rest in that.)

Consider also that the apostle John who was taken to heaven in The Revelation 6: 9-10. He sees a multitude of believers who had died for their faith. All these martyred people went directly to heaven upon their untimely deaths, and remembered their lives, asking the Father how long until their deaths would be avenged. We are the same people in life or after this earth-body dies, we simply go to the kingdom of our citizenship.

Truly Paul was correct when he stated in II Corinthians 5: 8: "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

But what about the use of 'sleep' to describe death? We will pick it up there next week, until then, blessings,

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Death; What about 'sleep' to describe death? 2 of 3 - 20200801

Hi all,

Daniel 12:2 is a verse that confuses people over whether a person 'sleeps' when they die, or go to heaven:

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt."

To our modern ear this seems to be in direct contradiction of Paul's statement that 'To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord', in II Corinthians 5: 8.

What we have here is a failure to communicate

To our modern mind the use of sleep to speak of death presents a picture of unconsciousness, of deep sleep where you aren't aware of anything. But the Biblical use of sleep can be different. We have to work through Old and New Testaments, translations and cultural considerations, all of which can seem to contradict one another.

Jesus said to the ladies wailing over the untimely death of Jairus' 12 year old daughter: "Why are you crying so? The girl is not dead, but sleeps." Mark 5: 39

"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I am going that I may awaken him from sleep.' 'Lord, if he is sleeping he will be all right.' But spoke of his death, but they had thought He was talking about taking rest in sleep." John 11: 11-13

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption." Acts 13: 36

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

"Behold, I show you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." I Corinthians 11:30, 15: 51

"For if we believe that Jesus both died and rose again, even so those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

"Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we will live together with Him." I Thessalonians 4: 14, 5:10

The Bible uses sleep to mean natural sleep of course.

And quite often the Bible's use of sleep refers to being spiritually asleep. One of my favorite album's was Keith Green's 1978 album "No Compromise", with one of the songs being "Asleep in the Light". Unfortunately that song is still as relevant to our times as it was in 1978.

The third use of sleep is our subject of course; calling death 'sleep'.

The ancient temple prayer which is still prayed at the Feast of Trumpets - the feast that is a picture of what we call the rapture - is about awakening the righteous dead, paraphrased by Paul in Ephesians 5:14:

"Therefore it says (temple prayer at Feast of Trumpets): "Awake you who sleep and rise from the dead, and Messiah will give you light..."

Here is the explanation: The use of sleep for death in the Bible refers to the body, not the soul.

The body sleeps, but there is not a single scripture saying a person's soul sleeps.

In Daniel 12:2 when it says 'Those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake (to face judgment)', the object being the dust of the earth, which means the body. Not the soul.

In John 11:11 when Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go to awaken him from sleep", He uses the word 'kekoimatai', which means 'to lie down'. In the other words, 'Lazarus' body is lying down (sleeping)' - the subject is the body, not the soul.

In Ecclesiastes 9:5 when it says; "For the living know they will die, but the dead know nothing, for they have no reward for they are soon forgotten", it is clearly talking about the body, not the soul.

OT Jewish and NT Christian viewpoint

Because the Old and New Testaments teach a physical resurrection of the dead, the Bible's view of death for the body is that of a temporary condition no matter if the person is a believer or unbeliever. (Daniel 12:2 for example)

The idea of 'soul sleep' therefore not only contradicts Judaism and Christianity from Genesis through The Revelation, but we have chapter and verse that states we go directly to be with the Lord.

When Paul wrote the Philippians that he desired to go and be with the Lord in death which was 'far better', he wasn't saying his soul needed a good long nap. He was saying he is eternal and upon the death of the body he would be with the Lord. That is the only way it is 'far better' to die - that one would be with the Lord.

We've seen what Jesus taught in Luke 16: 19-31; the 2 men who died both went to their respective places and saw one another, spoke to one another, and were clearly not 'asleep'. The evidence of Jesus' grammar tells us this was not a parable, but a real situation. And frankly, that what He told me as well on 10/1/86 when He taught me about these things.

Then we have Moses and Elijah who appeared to Him and talked with Him of his death in Jerusalem from the Law and Prophets, so they were clearly not in 'soul sleep'. Jesus told the repentant man on the cross that 'Today you will be with me in Paradise' so Jesus wasn't planning on either of them 'sleeping', and in Revelation 6: 9-11 John saw thousands of people before the Father's throne asking for vengeance for their (martyred) deaths.

The body 'sleeps' and that is the context of each verse in the Bible where sleep is spoken of as death. For us, our bodies may sleep, ie lose contact with the physical world, but for our eternal souls, to be absent from our body is to be present with the Lord, which is as Paul said, 'far better'. Next week, people in heaven both Biblical and some who I've seen there as well. Until then, blessings,

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Death #3 of 3, People in heaven. – 20200808

Hi all,

Hebrews 11 is often called 'the hall of faith' because it lists so many Old Testament 'heroes of the faith'. Among those people we find named or known by events in their lives:

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, 'the prophets', Daniel, Shadrach, Meschach, Abednigo. And many others: "Escaped the edge of the sword, routed foreign armies in battle, women who received their dead back to life, others tortured, in chains, in prison, put to death by being sawn in two (Isaiah)", and so on.

The writer continues: "Seeing then that we have such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight that hinders us and of sin that would hold onto us, and run the race set before us with patience, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Hebrews 12: 1-2

These people are not asleep for he calls them the 'cloud of witnesses', not dormant, but alive and well. The use of the phrase 'cloud of witnesses' indicates they are in heaven. The use of cloud paints a perfect picture of heaven, for if they were not in heaven he could have said 'their lives provide a testimony to us', or something else to say they are in 'soul sleep' or otherwise unaware of our own lives. But he didn't, instead saying they are a 'cloud' floating above us so to speak, witnessing our lives.

The word 'witnesses' is the Greek word 'martus' (where we get the word martyr) and means "eye witness as a spectator" or "one who can confirm what he has seen, witnessed, or knows".

Of those in Hebrews 11, it says they are now witnesses to our lives like spectators at a sporting event, which is why the author said 'let us run the race set before us'. They don't know everything going on in our lives, but they know the basics of what is happening in the body of Christ: Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus to talk of His approaching death on the cross, and in Revelation 6 John saw martyrs asking the Father who long until their deaths are avenged.

My opinion and observation, for thought

Satan only perverts the true, and we all know that in the world there are many who focus on ghosts, spirit guides and such. But the existence of a counterfeit proves the existence of the true, otherwise there is no need for a counterfeit.

Therefore the real and true are those who have died in Christ being witnesses of this life. Certainly Jesus visiting people all over the world after His ascension is true - not a ghost, not a spirit guide - but the real Jesus. From Acts 9 appearing to Paul and Ananias, to Acts 18 in Corinth giving instructions to Paul, down through the centuries, people have seen and do see in the Spirit realm and are aware of that realm being in turn, aware of this realm. Moses and Elijah appearing to Jesus in Luke 9 talking of His approaching death on the cross should be mentioned too.

But many of us have at various important times in our lives, had an awareness in our spirit that 'mom and dad' or another close family or friend are spiritually present and/or aware and witnessing that

event. We often hear that at the birth of a grandchild that someone felt or just knew down inside that so and so in heaven was watching. The same could be said of weddings and even funerals. Many if not most of us have had times in our lives we were aware but dare not say for fear of sounding weird, that we felt someone we love now in heaven, was watching as one of those among the cloud of witnesses.

Yes, there are the counterfeits, and it is forbidden to initiate contact with those who have died, but there are times heaven initiates it and lets us know someone near and dear to us though departed, are in fact witnessing what is happening in our lives here on earth.

What my friend saw, who he spoke with

A friend of mine went to the hospital for what he thought would be a simple procedure, but something went horribly wrong and he suffered a heart attack and died. They worked on him about 40 minutes to bring him back. During that time he was in heaven he spoke to people that he didn't know, but who he found out later, knew people that he knew. And to his amazement, they knew what was going on in the lives of some of their relatives on earth.

After he recovered and over the next weeks he would just go about his business and then cross paths with someone who he realized was the person mentioned by someone he met in heaven.

One example is a woman he saw in heaven who told him to tell 'James' to work hard and he will get through it, to complete his education. My friend didn't know the woman so didn't know who 'James' was. But one day about a week later he was talking to his neighbor who mentioned his son Jimmy. As they talked, my friend steered the conversation and discovered they had lost the neighbor's mom, Jimmy's grandmother, about a year earlier - and that Jimmy was in college but thinking about quitting. He was able to relay the story directly to Jimmy, confirm his grandmother always called him James, tell what she looked like, and all agreed that really was his grandmother.

One family

I've shared several times about my 'tour' of heaven and how I saw a little girl and boy sitting under a tree while over a dozen relatives from several generations were with them in what appeared to be some sort of family picnic or gathering. When I noticed the several generations of family present, the children's parents were not.

When I asked 'my' angel who was walking with me, he said: "These children died in a car accident, but their parents are still on the earth. When possible, children are raised by relatives in heaven." I told him I needed chapter and verse on that, and he responded: "Have you not read Ephesians 3:14 where Paul said he 'bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named'. There is only one family, it doesn't matter if some are now on earth and some are in heaven, you are all one family."

The earth-suit we have

When I was new in the Lord and getting to know the Father, He told me something that erased any doubt in my young mind. I had been reading and thinking on Colossians 1: 12-13:

"Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to be able to share in the inheritance of (all) the saints in the light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."

I was thinking on the difference between authority which is used here (though erroneously translated 'power' in some translations). Power is the gun on the hip of the policeman, authority is their ability to raise a hand to stop traffic. A police officer has authority to stop traffic, and has power in their gun to back up their authority.

I was thinking how it says I had been delivered from the authority of darkness - that Satan had no authority on me anymore - which meant I am a citizen of heaven now, and I have the right to command spirits away, I had the right to not sin, and so on. And that I had been translated, transferred, into the kingdom of the Father's Son, made able to partake of all therein. Amazing.

The Father spoke to me as I thought on these things: "Your body gives you authority on the earth. But when the body dies, your spirit and soul automatically become subject to the kingdom you're a citizen of."

It made clear the fact there are exactly 2 kingdoms in the universe: God's and Satan's. Light and dark. Legally and spiritually, being in Christ meant Satan had no authority over me in any way, for I became a citizen of the kingdom of Jesus. In Him I have authority over the darkness.

But that little sentence He spoke to me also made clear every single person walking on the earth is right now a citizen of one of those 2 kingdoms. Because their spirit and soul are temporarily housed in a physical body it provides them the ability to choose which kingdom they want to be part of as long as that body is alive in this physical realm. I also realized every person who has ever lived and died, is right now alive in one of those kingdoms.

Jesus detailed in the afore mentioned story of the beggar Lazarus and the rich man that human beings live on once their bodies die, and retain all our memory and senses, functioning fully in that realm which is unseen to the physical eye. But that realm created the physical world, and is just as real and solid and functioning as this natural world.

We don't die and then enter eternity, we are right now already living in eternity. One day each of us will join the cloud of witnesses of Hebrews 11. If we think like that and hold that truth close to your heart, you'll find the cares of the world, the pains and hurts suffered in this world, lose much of their sting. The presence of the Lord in your spirit will become just that much more noticeable and His grace will carry you through.

New subject next week, until then, blessings,
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