

What Happens when you Die?

We have all been to funerals where the pastor has wanted to reassure us that our parent, or Uncle Frank or Aunt Betsy, has gone to heaven and is now enjoying the glories of eternal bliss! How could that loved one be enjoying the glories of heaven while we are down here crying tears of sorrow and bereavement over the loss of our loved one? How can it be that our departed loved one could look down several years after his death and see his wife married to another man and much happier with the new man than with the dead husband? Would the person in heaven be happy in heaven knowing that his wife is far happier with another man? Would heaven be happy for him? Or, if a departed loved one watches his children make terrible mistakes or get hurt and he is helpless to help them; would he be happy seeing all that misery on earth? Heaven would be a living hell! Does the Bible really teach that when a person dies, he or she goes directly to heaven or hell? What is the Bible teaching on the state of humanity in death?

The truth about the origins of man and his state in death are very plain in the Bible. When man was originally created, the Bible says, "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." Genesis 2:7 Man was formed from dust or dirt, the Lord then gave to man life giving breath, and then man became a living being or soul. If either of those parts is taken away, then man becomes nothing or dead! When someone dies, the Bible says, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Eccl. 3:19, 20 The Bible says that the body of dust returns to dust whether of man or animal. Eccl 12:7 declares further, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

How could the Bible be any plainer? The dust returns to dust and the breath or life or spirit from God goes back to Him. God retains the breath. It is not floating around anywhere; it is the property of the Lord and He keeps it. Since dust and breath make up a living soul; at death, the soul is gone; it ceases to exist. Because the dust is in the dust, the breath is with the Lord, and the soul is gone; the Bible can unequivocally declare of man's state in death, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; **in that very day his thoughts perish.**" Ps. 146:3, 4 Also, "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: **but the dead know not anything,** neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under

the sun.” Eccl. 9:4-6 The wise man could not have been any plainer. Dead people know nothing, they feel nothing, and they know nothing of anything that goes on in this world!

Because of these profound and simple declarations from the Bible, the Bible authors refer to death as a sleep. In sleep, we are oblivious to what is going on around us. We know nothing while asleep. Notice what Jesus said in the story of Lazarus. “These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, ‘Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.” John 11:11-15 Jesus told the disciples that Lazarus was asleep and that He was going to go wake him up. The disciples were a little slow and thought Jesus was talking about Lazarus taking a nap. Then Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead. Jesus referred to death as a sleep!!!

Throughout the Old Testament, we find that when kings died the Bible says, “And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.” 1 Kings 15:24 “ “And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.” 2 Kings 8:24 “Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.” 2 Chronicles 21:1 “So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.” 1 Kings 2:10

Both the Old and New Testament are very clear about what happens when someone dies. Wait a minute, someone may say, Samuel sure wasn’t asleep when he conferred with Saul the king. This story in 1 Samuels 28 does not contradict the Bible position on the state of man in death when rightly understood. Notice the story. “And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? For thou art Saul. And the king

said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do." 1 Samuel 28:6-15

What do we see in this story? Because of Saul's rebellion, the Lord had stopped speaking to him. Because Saul had cut the Lord off, he went for help to a demon possessed woman at Endor. Saul asks her to bring up Samuel who was dead. The witch does not have the power to bring back a saint of God, but she does have the power to bring up a demon in his form!! The way the witch described the man made it sound like this was Samuel, but in actuality, it was a demon in the form of Samuel. " It was not God's holy prophet that came forth at the spell of a sorcerer's incantation. Samuel was not present in that haunt of evil spirits. That supernatural appearance was produced solely by the power of Satan. He could as easily assume the form of Samuel as he could assume that of an angel of light, when he tempted Christ in the wilderness. When Samuel was living, Saul had despised his counsel and had resented his reproofs. But now, in the hour of his distress and calamity, he felt that the prophet's guidance was his only hope, and in order to communicate with Heaven's ambassador he vainly had recourse to the messenger of hell! Saul had placed himself fully in the power of Satan; and now he whose only delight is in causing misery and destruction, made the most of his advantage, to work the ruin of the unhappy king. In answer to Saul's agonized entreaty came the terrible message, professedly from the lips of Samuel:" PP. pgs.. 679, 680 The devil can appear to be an angel, a prophet, or even Christ. We must understand that we cannot communicate with the dead!

Immortality is not something inherent in us. Immortality was forfeited by man when they sinned in the garden. Access to the tree of life ceased when man sinned. But the Lord Jesus Christ, by His death, has made immortality possible again. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:" 2 Timothy 1:9, 10 Only the One who is immortal could, by His death, extend that gift to us again. The Bible tells us that, "Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:15, 16

So, the immortal Christ, broken and bruised for us, extends to us the opportunity to have immortality at His coming and to perpetually eat from the tree of life again. He beckons us today, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."
Rev. 2:7