

What does the Bible say?

As you read this study, I encourage you to study the corresponding scriptures for yourself to develop a personal, confident understanding of biblical truth. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Study like the Bereans, who listened to Paul but did not take his word for it. They studied the scriptures for themselves so they would know for sure.

Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” I ask that you do the same with this study. Please pray before you begin.

The Mystery of Death Solved (Death)

Today, we are going to study what happens to people when they die. This will be a fascinating study. For our first scripture, let’s look at Rev. 1:18. Death remains a mystery that only Jesus can explain. He died and is now alive. We must rely solely on His Word regarding this matter. To understand death, we first need to understand how life was given to mankind, as described in Genesis.

In Gen. 2:7, man was formed from the dust of the ground. Then God breathed into him the breath of life. As a result of this union of dust and breath, man became a living soul. We can illustrate it this way:

DUST + BREATH = LIVING SOUL

Another word for “breath” is “spirit.” These terms are used interchangeably in the Bible. Here’s an example to illustrate this.

In Job 27:3, Job uses a Hebrew poetic structure called parallelism. He says something in one sentence and then repeats it in the next, using a synonym (a word that means the same thing). Here, the words “breath” and “spirit” are used interchangeably. This is how the “spirit” can be in his nostrils. This definitely isn’t talking about the Holy Spirit. The word for “spirit” here means “wind.” In context, it refers to the life-giving force (the breath of life)—the thing that keeps a person breathing and their heart beating, etc.

See Job 33:4. “Spirit” and “breath” are used as synonyms again. So life results when a lifeless body composed of the elements of the earth unites with the energizing force called the spirit or

breath. Man becomes a living soul. Notice he isn't infused with a soul; he becomes a living soul when the breath and body are actively joined.

Now let's look at how the Bible describes death. Read Eccl. 12:7. The dust returns to the earth, and the spirit returns to God. Remember, this "spirit" is simply the breath. It is not the person. It is the electricity, so to speak.

Here is another verse that describes death. Ps. 104:29, 30. The breath returns to God, and the dust to the earth. Notice how verse 30 describes creation. Again, we see that the words "breath" and "spirit" are used to mean the same thing. Death is the opposite of creation.

(LIVING SOUL) MINUS (BREATH) = DEATH

Now the question is, what becomes of the living soul that forms from the union of breath and dust? This is explained by comparing death to a light bulb.

Illustration: The light bulb represents the body, and electricity symbolizes the breath of life. When electricity flows through the bulb, it produces light, which signifies the living soul—an active, thinking person. When you switch off the light, the electricity stops, and the light goes out—not into a different dimension, but ceases to exist. Similarly, when God cuts off the electricity from our lives, the breath stops, and the soul's presence ends. The individual does not immediately go to heaven, hell, or purgatory; they merely cease to exist. This state of ceaseless rest is described in the Bible as peaceful sleep.

The Bible often describes death as sleep. For example, Acts 7:59-60 shows Stephen knowing his spirit would return to God. When he died, he didn't go to heaven or hell but "fell asleep," as the Bible states. Similarly, in John 11:11-14, Jesus also compared death to sleep.

What is this sleep like? Is it something frightening we should fear? Psalm 146:4 states that in death's sleep, all thoughts stop. There is no consciousness or feeling. Therefore, death is nothing to fear. Ecclesiastes 9:10 explains that there is no knowledge, wisdom, work, or activity in death. It describes death as a peaceful sleep. Additionally, Psalm 115:17 says that the dead do not praise the Lord; they are asleep.

The Bible clearly indicates that when people die, they do not immediately go to heaven or hell. Instead, they sleep until resurrection. After resurrection, they are directed to heaven or hell. Several verses support this, showing they don't go directly upon death. For example, in Acts 2:29, 34, King David is described as sleeping in his grave and not ascending to heaven.

Job asks and responds to the question, "What happens when we die?" In Job 14:10-15, it says, "Man dies...he gives up the ghost (breath) and where is he?" This is the core question, right? The answer given is—"man lieth down...they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep...If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days... will I wait till my change comes. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee."

Man sleeps until the resurrection, when God will call him from the grave at Jesus' second coming. 1 Cor. 15:51-54 (Read) At the last trump. This is the time that we will be changed. Our mortal bodies will be changed into immortal bodies. The wicked also sleep until they are resurrected to be punished with hellfire. Job 21:30-32 says that the unsaved are reserved in the tomb/grave until the day of destruction. They will be brought forth to be punished.

Initially, it might feel disappointing to realize that our deceased loved ones, whom we believed were in heaven, are actually asleep, waiting for the Life Giver's call. However, upon reflection, the truth in the Bible is genuinely good news. Imagine if they were in heaven, observing all our pain and suffering—would that truly be heaven for them? Not at all.

Another point to consider is whether it is fair for God to give us rewards immediately after death. For instance, imagine an unconverted sheep stealer from biblical times goes to hell right after dying. He would have been suffering there for 2,000 years. Conversely, in 1945, Hitler—who was far more wicked than that sheep stealer—died and went to hell, where he would have burned for about 50 years. Who is more wicked—the sheep stealer or Hitler? (Answer: Hitler.) But who endures more punishment—the sheep stealer, who has been burning for 2,000 years? This illustrates why God permits us to sleep until the resurrection. It's the only way He can be just, ensuring everyone receives their reward simultaneously.

The idea that people do not truly die but instead go to heaven, hell, or purgatory did not originate from the Bible. It was introduced by Satan, who first lied in Genesis 3:4, saying, "You shall not surely die." Historical evidence shows that ancient pagan religions promoted Satan's lie, suggesting that people possess immortal souls and do not really die. Cultures like the Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks propagated this belief. When the Christian church drifted from its original teachings in the early centuries, this mistaken concept of death was adopted into church doctrine.

Scripture does not support the idea that the soul is immortal. Out of 858 instances of the word "soul," it is never connected to "immortal." The Bible clearly teaches that the soul is mortal and that it dies, resting in sleep until the resurrection (see Ezek. 18:4). There are several reasons Satan promotes the belief that we do not die. One is his impersonation of the dead—demons can appear as our deceased relatives and mimic their voices (2 Cor. 11:13). They can even reveal knowledge only the deceased would know. The Bible predicts that in the last days, spirits of devils will perform such miracles (Rev. 16:14; Matt. 24:24). From 1979 to 1989, the percentage of adults claiming contact with the dead increased from 27% to 42%, with nearly 20 million Americans reporting mystical experiences. Satan is preparing people for his final great deceptions.

Let's conclude by considering how we can be confident of eternal life. Refer to 1 John 5:11, 12. I am grateful that there's no reason to fear death. It is merely a short sleep until we are awakened to receive eternal life. This incredible gift is ours if we have embraced Jesus as our Savior and Lord. We don't need to fear death; it's a peaceful, restful sleep until Jesus raises

those who have fallen asleep, and we are reunited to spend eternity together. Such a wonderful time awaits, doesn't it?

I encourage you to pray and tell Jesus that you are thankful for His death on the Cross and his breaking the power of death and the grave. He is the resurrection and the life.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. How do you explain people who've seen dead relatives in a dream?

There are two possible causes of this.

a. God may be comforting a grieving person who has lost a loved one by showing them that their loved one's eternal destiny is safe. Just because we see this person in heaven doesn't mean they are there at that moment. The Bible says they are asleep. But God can comfort us with this assurance.

God often gave dreams to show people things that hadn't actually happened yet. John the Revelator saw in heaven those martyred by the papacy during the Middle Ages (Rev. 7:13, 14). We know these people weren't actually in heaven because the dead sleep, and these martyrs had not even lived or died yet when John saw them in vision.

b. The devil may personate the deceased to deceive us. The way we can tell is if the dead loved one returns repeatedly and if they say things that contradict the Bible. We should always be very suspicious of anything that proposes the dead are not really dead.

2. What about people who had life after death experiences and have been brought back to life to tell about it? There are several possibilities for what could be happening. First, we are clear on what the Bible says—the dead are asleep. So there are only three other explanations:

(1) The devil can give a person this illusion so he can use it to deceive.

(2) People who have these experiences often are in the hospital and are under the influence of mind-altering drugs.

(3) When a person's heart stops beating, there is still residual oxygen in the brain.

Consequently, for a period of time, people can hear and sense things happening even though they are technically dead. Since the brain is being slowly starved of oxygen, the person experiences hallucinations mingled with the reality of their surroundings. Hence, they feel as if they are floating out of their bodies.

3. What about the thief on the cross? Didn't Jesus say he would go to heaven that day?

Luke 23:42, 43 (Read) "You will be with me in paradise." (Paradise is where the tree of life is (Rev. 2:7), which is where the throne of God is (Rev. 22:1-2). So paradise is heaven. This is important for some people, because they have been taught that the thief didn't go to heaven, but instead went to paradise—something like a stopping-off point before reaching heaven.)

Jn. 20:7 (Read) Jesus didn't go to paradise that day. Three days later, on the morning of the resurrection, He told Mary He had not yet ascended to His Father. Did Jesus lie to the thief

when He said, “Today you will be with me in paradise?” Jesus doesn’t lie. So how are we to explain this text in Luke? By understanding that the Bible's punctuation is not inspired. The original writings of the apostles were in languages that lacked punctuation or verse-and-chapter divisions. It all ran together. It wasn’t until hundreds of years later that punctuation, verse, and chapter divisions were added. In the process, a few commas were misplaced. What Jesus actually said was, “Verily I say unto thee today, thou wilt be with me in paradise.”

As you prayerfully consider this topic, I want you to know that we are here to help answer any questions you might have. If you have questions, please get in touch with us at <https://freechristianbooks.us>