

What Happens When You Die?

When I first learned what the Scriptures *truly* teach about death, I was taken aback. I was raised to believe that all my deceased ancestors were looking down upon us from Heaven. The Bible, however, teaches just the opposite – that “the dead know not anything.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) I didn’t want to believe this at first (because I found a strange comfort in thinking that my dead grandmother was watching over me). But the question was asked, ‘What kind of joy could be experienced in Heaven by relatives who die before us if they have to watch all the suffering still occurring on this planet?’ It made me think. Then I didn’t want to think about it. I tried to dismiss the notion. Being 28 at the time and thinking I already knew everything, my pride was preventing me from embracing the truth.

I don’t claim to “know it all” now about this subject ... but *God* does, and His Word is truth. Let us see what *else* Scripture has to say on the topic.

Although Jesus told the thief on the cross, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise,” how could that have been true if Christ told Mary on Resurrection Sunday, “I have not yet ascended to My Father”? The solution to that question is a matter of punctuation, merely a misplaced comma (which did not exist, as you may know, in the original text). “Verily I say unto thee today ...” was a common way of prefacing a statement, e.g. “Observe thou that which I command thee this day...” and others.

Yes, there are a few verses which *seem*, at first, to indicate that translation to Heaven is *immediate*. But the majority of state-of-the-dead verses in the Bible indicate that death is a “sleep,” that the dead are “resting in peace” in an unconscious state awaiting the resurrection. Scripture also explains that the “spirit” which returns to the Creator at death is not an immortal soul (for only *God* is immortal), but rather the spirit that leaves our bodies is the “breath” of life, the breath of God. “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) At death, this breath can return to God because we don’t breathe while resting in the grave.

I was very convicted about the true state of the dead when I read John 5:28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Of course, death is not the end for believers. The righteous are resurrected at the second coming of Christ: “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 clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

This, when I stopped to think about it, is indeed far more comforting than the theory of having “ghosts” hovering over us (even if they are “good” ghosts).

Other verses:

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake.” Daniel 12:2

“But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy.” Isaiah 26:19

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.” Hosea 13:14

Why bother to *correct* someone who finds comfort in believing the lie?

Because the enemy wishes to have us believe that our dead relatives can return in a disembodied spirit to communicate “truth” from beyond. If a grieving person believes that this type of communication is possible, he may very well also believe (and do) anything that the imposter suggests or commands.

Knowing that returning from the grave is impossible, however, (knowing that it is not scriptural, and that the dead cannot speak again until the resurrection) can prevent many precious people from being deceived by the lying demons attempting to impersonate their dead loved ones.

In these the last days, spiritualism will abound—and so will confusion and deception. Thankfully, our Lord has given us a Guidebook to keep us from the snares of the enemy. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

As the Lord opens the door to share truth with others, let us each pray for wisdom from the Holy Spirit to speak the truth, in love, as caring “watchmen” sounding warnings. Let us not be afraid to unmask evil to share in the victory of Christ.