

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

There's a saying that goes, "It's not that life is so short, it's just that death is so long!" It makes a good point, doesn't it? No matter how long we live, it's clear that death will be longer. What happens at death? Where do the dead go? Can we communicate with the dead? We need answers we can trust. The devil has always lied to mankind about death. So, let's find our answers right from the Word of God.

KEY POINTS

It all happened so fast. Frank barely had time to think. He'd been outside raking leaves, when he suddenly felt a sharp pain in his chest. He then collapsed. His wife, watching from the kitchen window, called for help. By the time the ambulance arrived, Frank's heart had stopped beating. As the paramedics tried frantically to revive him, much to everyone's relief, his heart started to beat again. Frank had a Near Death Experience. And though for those few minutes Frank's heart stopped working, his mind hadn't.

After he recovered, he told an incredible story of how after he collapsed, all the pain disappeared. He said he felt himself leave his body and shoot right into a gray, crackling mist. Frank floated outside his body and watched the medics trying to revive him. Then, off in the mist, he seemed to see his dead father who smiled at him and waved. Then a being full of warmth and light began talking to Frank and told him that it was not his time to die, that he needed to go back and become a better person. The next thing Frank knew he was staring up into the faces of the medics who had just revived him. For many, stories like this are considered proof of life after death. But what does the Bible teach?

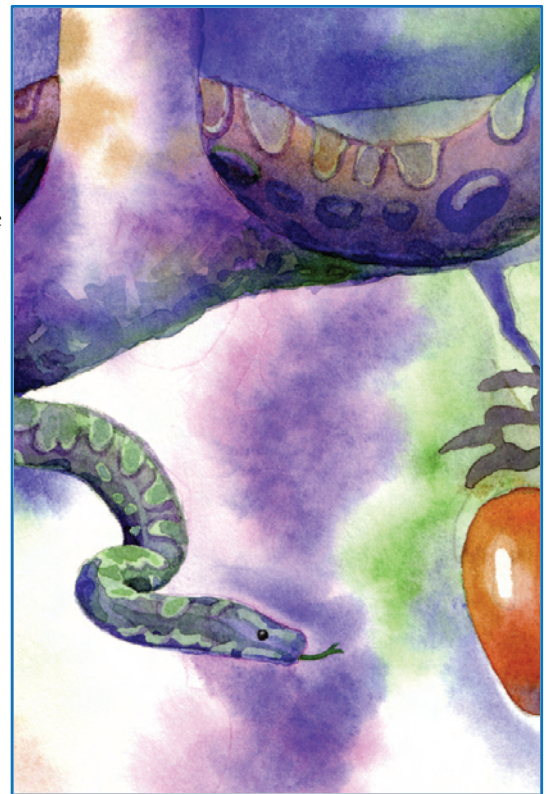
In the Garden of Eden God told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden fruit they would die. Satan, the serpent, said "No. You will not die." (Gen. 2:17; 3:2-4) The first lie that Satan told was about death. There are presently two views in Christianity about death. One view is that the dead go immediately either to heaven or hell. The other view is that the dead go to sleep until the second coming of Jesus when the dead will be called back to life – eternal life for the righteous. What does the Bible teach?

Bible Teachings on Death

- "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in 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." (John 5:28,29)
- "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2)
- "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Psalm 6:5)
- "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." (Psalm 115:17)
- "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything." (Ecclesiastes 9:5).



What does the Bible teach about death and life after death?



The first lie that Satan told was about death.

Are the dead in heaven or sleeping in the grave? They are sleeping in the grave! They know nothing because they are asleep. Remember the story of Lazarus? When Jesus heard that Lazarus had died, what did He say? “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.” (John 11:11-14) It is clear from the Bible, despite what you may have heard elsewhere, that the dead are asleep.



Death is a sleep in which one goes to the grave and remains unconscious until the coming of Christ.

Notice this text about the creation of man: “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) Notice two elements: the dust of the ground and God’s breath caused Adam to become a living soul.

Adam did not receive a living soul, he became one. The word “soul” is used in the Bible in numerous ways, usually to mean a living being, but it is never used in the sense of our being immortal. The Bible never teaches that man has an “immortal soul.” In fact, it says the opposite: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18;20). The same word used for “soul” in this verse is the word used for “soul” in Genesis 2:7.

Immortality is a gift of God (John 3:16). It is granted at the resurrection when Jesus returns. Paul says, “This mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

What about the story of the thief on the cross? Didn’t Jesus say that he would join Him in heaven that very day? No. On Sunday, Jesus still had not returned to heaven. (John 20:17) The text simply states “assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43). Remember, punctuations were not present in the original text.

But what about the people who almost die and then come back to tell about some other realm of conscious existence? First, none of these people were really dead. All were unconscious for a short time then came back to awareness. Secondly, medical science has shown how people on drugs can have similar experiences. They are simply having hallucinations in which they see things that aren’t real.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Let’s summarize what we have learned: First, death came because of sin and death is a sleep in which one goes to the grave and remains unconscious until the coming of Christ. Secondly, Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose from the dead to prove He had power over death. Thirdly, at His second coming He will raise the righteous dead and give them immortality. (Read 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

Christ died on the cross for our sins. By His resurrection He proved that He died for our sins and that His sacrifice for our sins had been accepted. So, is Jesus your Savior? If so, you have nothing to fear in death. Death is a temporary sleep. We rest in His arms, waiting for that great resurrection morning!