

WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

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All Scripture from New King James unless noted.

John 11:25-26 “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

You will “never die,” Jesus said. Yet millions have died - over the last two thousand years since Jesus taught. We die physically - but do we really “die.” What happens when we die?

Many, of course, have taught that human beings only *seem* to die. The physical body dies, but the spirit lives on in Heaven with Christ - or - in Hell with Satan. Is this what the Bible teaches? We must search the Scriptures, and consider all of the evidence - then we must each decide where the weight of the evidence falls.

We at Prophecy Viewpoint, believe that this is NOT a “salvation issue” - that is - one which would cause a loss of salvation for failure to believe a specific doctrine. We do believe that the understanding one holds concerning man’s state in death does strongly effect his or her personal relationship with Christ. I will explain.....

THE BIBLE CALLS DEATH A SLEEP

John 11:11-13 “Lazarus is sleeping”

Acts 7:60 Stephen “fell asleep”

Daniel 12:2 “them that sleep in the dust”

Acts 13:36 David “fell asleep”

Job 3:13 “then I should have slept”

I Corinthians 15:6,18 “some have fallen asleep”

I Corinthians 11:30 “many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”

Job 14:12 “nor be raised out of their sleep”

I Thessalonians 4:14,15 “those who are asleep”

Jeremiah 51:39 “And sleep a perpetual sleep”

Psalms 13:3 “lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

Matthew 9:18, 24 “my daughter has just died” “the girl is not dead, but sleeping.”

NOTE: Jesus did not consider the “first” death to be death at all, but simply a sleep. The “second death” from which there is no resurrection - this is the only true death, in God’s eyes.

Many seem to find comfort in the thought that a loved one is now in heaven, assuming of course, that if they are in heaven, they are happy. But if you were to die and then leave your loved ones, to live without them for years and years; would you be happy? And if somehow you were aware of their suffering in this old world, suffering you could do nothing to relieve; would you be happy? Such a circumstance, to me would seem cruel. Thank God it is not so. God has chosen the most simple, kind way for us to pass the time from death to the resurrection -- asleep.

Have you ever had an anesthetic for an operation? Remember how it seemed as if it was only a moment before you were waking up in the recovery room? You were not conscious of the passage of any time. What if death could be like that?

You fall asleep one moment, and the next moment you hear Jesus' voice. It's over!! It is the resurrection, the return of Christ in glory, the end of this age. You don't have to wait or wonder. Your loved ones are there.

And if a loved one has not accepted salvation, and is not there, you know that person is asleep, not in a place of torment. If I could choose, I would want death to be a peaceful, unconscious sleep. In fact, I believe this is what the Bible teaches.

1. DOES MAN RECEIVE HIS REWARD AT DEATH, OR AT THE RETURN OF CHRIST?

Luke 14:14 "for you shall be *repaid* at the resurrection of the just."

Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and THEN He will *reward* each according to his works."

NOTE: I believe that the wicked will also receive their just sentence. (Daniel 12:2-3)

Revelation 22:12 "... I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me,
to give to every one according to his work."

II Timothy 4:8 "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

NOTE: Everyone who looks forward to Christ's return will receive his or her reward on the same day.

I Peter 2:9 "... if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. (NIV)

NOTE: The unrighteous are NOT punished until the day of judgment.

"SEEK FOR IMMORTALITY."

I Timothy 6:15-16 says that only God "has immortality." [Angels can die.]

Romans 2:7 tells us to "seek for immortality."

[Why would we be told to seek for something which we all naturally possess?]

In the Bible, there is no such phrase as "immortal soul." Those two words are not used together!

I John 5:11-12 "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have (eternal) life."

Acts 17:28 "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

***** Without Him we have no existence. *****

NOTE: The other day a young woman told me that she was taught that being "made in the image of God" meant that we were made immortal. I asked her where she found that in Scripture. We human beings create little beings in our own image. In this - are we not made "in His image?" We have free will, and we can choose to love, and to obey our Creator. In this also - are we not "in His image?"

Animals do not have self awareness, and cannot choose - only mankind has this gift.

2. HOW THEN AND WHEN DO WE RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE?

John 14:3 “I will come again and receive you unto myself.”

John 6:40 “For this is the will of My Father, that **everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life**; and I myself will raise him up at the last day.”

NOTE: Only those who believe in the Son will receive eternal life.

John 6:39 “at the last day”

John 6:44 “I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 6:54 “I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 11:24 Martha said to Christ concerning her brother Lazarus:

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Question: Did Martha mean the last day of this age, or “the last day” of each individual person’s life?

Paul gives us the answer: The dead will be raised and the living will be changed at the same event.

I Corinthians 15:51-52 “at the last trumpet”

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

I Thessalonians 4:16,17 “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 air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

II Thessalonians 2:1 We are “gathered together to Him” at “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Job 14:12 “So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from **their sleep.**”

NOTE: The heavens pass away at the second coming of Christ. (II Peter 3:10)

3. WHERE ARE THE DEAD WHEN THEY HEAR THE LORD’S VOICE?

John 5:28-29 “The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice, and shall come forth.”

Daniel 12:2 “And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake,”

4. WHAT IS OUR BODY LIKE IN THE RESURRECTION?

Luke 24:36-39 Jesus’s body was made up of “flesh and bones” after His resurrection.

Philippians 3:21 “Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,”
[NOTE: Our body will be changed to be like Christ’s body after His resurrection.]

Psalms 17:15 David said “I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”

Job 19:26 “Though after my skin, worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God.” KJV

I Corinthians 15:44 “It is sown a natural body, **it is raised a spiritual body.**”

I Corinthians 15:49 “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

I Corinthians 15:50 “Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.”

NOTE: After the resurrection, Christ appeared in the upper room without entering through the door. It seems the spiritual body can go back and forth between the physical dimension and the heavenly dimension. We are promised that when we are “changed” we will be like Christ. We WILL HAVE BODIES--just bodies that are different than those we have in this life - they will be “spiritual” bodies.

5. AT THE DEATH OF THE BODY - DOES SOME ESSENTIAL PART OF US LEAVE THE BODY- TO CONTINUE CONSCIOUSLY EITHER IN HEAVEN, OR IN A PLACE OF TORMENT?

James 2:26 “The body without the spirit is dead.”

THE BODY : **Genesis 2:7** “God formed man of the dust of the ground”

Genesis 3:19 “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

“*YOU came from dust.*” “*YOU are dust.*” “*YOU will return to dust.*”

Not, “PART OF YOU will return to dust, while the other part of you lives on in heaven or hell.” That would mean that you came from God, and are going to “return” - which implies some sort of pre-existence with incarnation, like Christ.)

6. BUT DOESN'T THE SPIRIT RETURN TO GOD?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then the dust (body) will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

The FIRST key word here is “return.” The spirit will return to God, who gave “it.” If by “spirit” you refer to the essence of the person,, that would mean that the essence of the person existed prior to his life on earth. One can only return to a place where he has once been.

The SECOND key word is “gave.” God gave “it,” meaning God gave the spirit.

NOTE: According to this verse, “the spirit” returns to God regardless of the character of the person to whom it was given.

**7. IF THE SPIRIT IS NOT THE PERSON-WITHOUT THE BODY,
THEN WHAT IS THE SPIRIT THAT WILL “RETURN TO GOD?”**

THE SPIRIT:

Genesis 2:7 “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man BECAME a living soul.”

Job 33:4 “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

Job 27:3 “As long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils.”

Isaiah 42:5 “... who gives breath (shamah) to the people on it, spirit (ruwach) to those who walk on it:”

Two Hebrew words, “shamah” meaning breath, and “ruwach” meaning breath or wind, are translated “spirit” in the Old Testament. The wind or breath represented the unseen power or life force - the spirit of God - the “breath of the Almighty.”

In the New Testament the word translated “spirit” is the Greek (pneuma) also meaning breath or wind. In the New Testament, this same “spirit” was given to the disciples on the Day of Pentacost, and it was described as a “rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2). In another scene, Jesus “breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (John 20:22). The same spirit which was breathed into Adam, giving him life, was breathed upon the disciples, giving them power.

It is God’s own spirit, HIS breath, the life force - that returns to HIM at the time of death.

8. WHAT THEN IS “A LIVING SOUL?”

Body + Breath = a living Person.

Body + Spirit from God = a living Being.

Body + Spirit = a living soul.

Genesis 2:7 “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man *became* a living soul.”

He became a “nephesh” - a breather - that which breathes - a living soul.

NO BODY - NO LIFE

The Bible Account of Risen and Translated Saints Helps to Clarify This Concept.

Jude 9 Michael contended with Satan for the body of Moses. Why would Satan want the body?

If Moses (as disembodied spirit) had already gone to Heaven, why this conflict over possession of the His corpse? Why?? Because a human being has no life without a body. There is no such thing as a “disembodied spirit.”

NOTE: At this point in time, no person had been resurrected from the dead. I believe that God wanted to resurrect Moses and take him to Heaven. Satan wanted Moses to stay dead. No doubt he pointed to Moses’ sin as the reason why he should not be resurrected. Jesus had not yet died on the cross. The penalty for sin had not yet been paid. But God’s word is absolutely sure. He would raise Moses from the dead, setting aside his sin, because HE had promised to give His Son as the ultimate sacrifice and payment for sins. To God, who sees the future, it was as if the payment had already been made.

Romans 5:14 “death reigned from Adam to Moses.”

II Kings 2:11,16-17 Elijah went up in a fiery chariot to heaven. The empty shell of his body didn’t fall back to earth.

Moses was a type of those who will be resurrected when Christ returns. Elijah is a type of those who will be living to see Christ come, who will be changed and translated without seeing death. On the Mount of Transfiguration Christ stood with Moses and Elijah. This was a miniature representation of His coming kingdom. (Mark 9:2-4)

Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5 Enoch’s body was never found after he was translated to heaven without seeing death.

Matthew 27:51 When Jesus rose from the dead, a special group of saints was resurrected also. Jesus presented them in heaven as the “first fruits” of the great harvest that would follow at His second coming. These saints are mentioned in Revelation 4:4 and 5:8-10 as the “24 Elders” “redeemed from among men.” These saints, Matthew says, arose with bodies that could be seen because they witnessed in Jerusalem. Christ, speaking through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah says of this resurrection, “together with my dead body shall they arise” (Isa. 26:19).

NOTE: *Whether it becomes fish food, is burned in fire, or is wrapped in satin and encased in marble -it really does NOT matter what happens to the body after death. It will return to the elements. Jesus will give us a new “spiritual body” when He returns.*

9. IS THERE SUCH A THING, AS A DEAD SOUL? CAN A SOUL DIE?

YES! - BECAUSE A SOUL IS A PERSON.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 “The soul who sins shall die.” (Soul in this verse means “person.”)

Revelation 16:3 “Every living soul died in the sea.” KJV (Soul here means “person.”)

James 5:19-20 “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover multitude of sins.

NOTE: “Once-saved-always-saved” is NOT taught here.

10. THE USE OF THE WORDS “SPIRIT,” “SOUL,” AND “LIFE” IS CONFUSING TO SOME. LET’S TRY TO SORT IT OUT.

Old Testament Hebrew word	English translation
“ruwach”	wind, breath, mind, spirit (Strong’s #07307)
“neshamah”	breath, spirit (Strong’s #05397)
“nephesh”	breath, one who breathes, person, breather, soul, life, heart, mind (Strong’s #05315)

Old Testament Greek Septuagint	Hebrew word
pneuma	“ruwach”
phoe	“neshamah”
psuche	“nephesh”

The Septuagint was an ancient translation from the Hebrew to Greek, done by scholars in Egypt where the Jews had fled after the Babylonians captured Jerusalem. It is dated to the third century before Christ. Knowing what Greek words were used to translate the Old Testament Hebrew, we can carry these Greek words forward to see how they were used in the New Testament.

CONSIDER A FEW VERSES:

I Kings 17:21,22 “And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, “Oh Lord God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul (nephesh) come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again.”

The word “nephesh” here translated “soul” is translated as “life” 118 other places in the Old Testament. It does make sense to say “Let this child’s life (or breath) come into him again.”

Genesis 35:18 (Speaking of Rachel) “as her soul (nephesh-breath, life) was departing.”

Psalms 104:29 “You take away their breath (ruwach), they die, and return to their dust.”

Job 34:14-15 “If He should gather to Himself His spirit (ruwach) and His breath (neshamah), all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

Matthew 16:25 “Whosoever shall lose his life (psuche) for my sake shall find it.”

It would make no sense to say “lose his soul for my sake.”

James 5:20 “He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul (psuche) from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

Here once again we have the suggestion that a soul can die, because a soul is a person.

11. IS MAN CONSCIOUS AFTER DEATH?

Ecclesiastes 9:5,6,10 “For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know nothing. Their love, their hate, their envy, is perished.

Psalms 146:4 “His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

Job 3:11,13,17,18,19 “Why did I not die at birth?”

... For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; Then I would have been at rest ... “There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they do not hear the voice of the oppressor ...”

Ecclesiastes 9:6 “Neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.”

NOTE: Stories of angry ghosts are abundant, but the Bible does not support the idea that these spirits are the departed dead. They are Satan and his angels, which seek to deceive men.

Leviticus 20:27 In Moses’ time a man or woman who claimed to communicate with the dead was to be stoned to death.

12. CAN THE DEAD COMMUNICATE AT ALL?

Isaiah 38:18 “For the dead cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit (a symbol of death) cannot hope for (to be helped) thy truth.”

[Prayers or baptism for the dead are useless.]

Psalms 115:17 “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.”

13. DIDN'T SAUL SPEAK WITH THE SPIRIT OF SAMUEL? (I Samuel 28:14)

First God had commanded, "Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them to be defiled by them" (Lev. 19:31). "A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death" (Deut. 18:9-12). "There shall not be found among you one who conjures up spells or a medium, or a spiritist or one who calls up the dead" (I Sam. 28:7).

Note: The above verses tell us how very serious a thing it is, to try and contact the dead. God absolutely forbade this practice. Why?? Because the one who thinks he or she has made contact with the dead, is actually communicating with Satan or with one of his evil angels. Satan wants to deceive us into believing a lie - his lie, "You shall not surely die." (Gen 2:17 & 3:4)

Second God had departed from Saul and would not communicate with him (I Sam. 28:6,15).

Third Samuel was supposedly "brought up" "out of the earth" during the seance. Is this where the spirits of the saints are? And can any witch cause a saint of God to return to earth, at her bidding.

Fourth Samuel was described by the medium, as an old man. Is this how the saints look? Old?

Fifth God punished Saul with death for this action in "asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it" (I Chr. 10:13,14).

The apparition of Samuel was most likely Satan.

Remember: This will absolutely be one of the deceptions, which Satan will use in the last days!

14. AREN'T THERE HUMAN BEINGS ALIVE IN HEAVEN NOW? ANSWER: YES!

First Enoch was translated without seeing death (Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5, Rom. 5:14).

Second Moses was resurrected by Christ just after he died, and taken to heaven (Jude 9).

Third Elijah was translated without seeing death (II Kings 2:11).

Fourth Many Saints - were raised with His Son. God raised a representative group from "all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples." These people ascended with Christ from the Mount of Olives. (Matt. 27:51-53, Rev. 5:8-9). [These were many saints, but not all of them.]

NOTE: These people were either raised from the dead, or translated without seeing death - in other words - they were alive when taken to Heaven. In no case were spirits taken to heaven without bodies. Matthew 27:51 says "many bodies" were raised. Why would God raise the bodies of these saints, if they had already gone to heaven as spirits?

NOTE: Christ is called "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor 15:20). He was the first to be resurrected with an immortal body. I believe that Moses was resurrected conditionally, with a mortal body. Enoch and Elijah were translated with mortal bodies. If Christ had failed - these men would have been returned to the earth - to die. But He did not fail, and when He returns in glory this mortality will "put on immortality." (1 Cor. 15:51-54)

**15. WHO ARE THE “SOULS UNDER THE ALTER” DESCRIBED BY JOHN?
(Revelation 6:9-11)**

The expression “souls under the alter” crying out, is similar to the expression Abel’s blood which “cried out from the ground” in Genesis. 4:10. Both are figurative, not literal. The cruel death of martyrs and saints, from righteous Able to the present, demands that justice ultimately prevail. In the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, the blood of the sacrifices was poured out at the base of “the alter” (Lev. 4:7). The martyrs who shed their blood for Christ are compared with sacrifices because they made the ultimate sacrifice in giving their lives. Paul said that he was being “poured out as a drink offering” (Phil 2:17 & 2 Tim 4:6).

16. DOESN’T MATTHEW SAY THAT ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB ARE LIVING?

Matthew 22:31-32 “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, “I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Compare these Verses:

Romans 4:17 “God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;”

Luke 20:37-38 “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

NOTE: Time is a dimension created by God. Whether they existed in the past, or will exist in the future, to God it is the same. HE is not bounded by time as we are. HE does not just see the future, HE exists in the past, present and future alike, therefore to HIM, the dead are alive. We experience only the present. To us the dead are sleeping.

17. DIDN’T CHRIST TELL THE THIEF NEXT TO HIM ON THE CROSS THAT HE WOULD BE WITH HIM IN PARADISE THAT DAY? (Luke 23:43)

First: In the original text there were no punctuation marks. The comma was supplied by the translators. Therefore the text could just as easily read; “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

[I’m telling you today (present tense), you will be (future) with me in paradise.]

Second Christ himself had not yet gone to Paradise on Sunday morning. He said to Mary, “I have not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17).

Jesus was asleep in death. He rested in the tomb during the hours of the Sabbath.

18. DIDN'T CHRIST SAY THAT HELL IS GOING ON NOW IN HIS PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS? (Luke 16:19-31)

Christ used a story (or parable) to make a point.

Matthew 13:34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. (NIV)

The Jewish people had a long tradition of stories called "Midrash." These stories were handed down for generations. They illustrated or clarified the lessons of Scripture. Everyone understood that these stories were not to be taken literally. Heaven and Hell are not within shouting distance. People in Heaven cannot see people in Hell suffering. If they could, it wouldn't be heaven.

First: Christ wanted to teach the uselessness of riches to the dead.

Second: Christ was predicting the hardness of the Jewish leaders (represented by the rich man and his brothers) who would not be convinced even if "one rose from the dead." True to the parable, the leaders were not convinced after Lazarus and then Christ Himself "rose from the dead."

"Father Abraham, please send someone to warn my five brothers," the rich Jew pleaded. Judah (father of the Jews) did indeed have five full-blood brothers. They were all sons of Leah. Their names were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar and Zebulun (Genesis 29-30). MEANING: This parable was warning to the Jews, of their true destiny, should they remain unrepentant.

The "rich man" represented the Jewish leaders who thought that they were "rich" in the things of God. They believed that they would go to the "bosom of Abraham" at death, just because they were Jews - and "righteous" Jews at that.

The poor beggar Lazarus, sitting outside the gate, represented the Gentiles, who were "outside" of the kingdom, or so the Jews thought. They were ceremonially "unclean," and the beggar in the story was covered with sores, making him literally unclean.

CONCLUSION: Jesus put a different "twist" to a common parable, and His teaching was in direct opposition to commonly held beliefs. This parable IS about consequences, but it is not a detailed description of the afterlife. We should not build a whole doctrine on a single use of a word "Hell" - even if it were not located in a parable on an entirely different subject. Hell is NOT an unending place of horrors situated just across the way from a Heaven of joy and delights.

19. DOESN'T THE BIBLE SAY THAT WHEN A MAN DIES, HE IS "GATHERED TO HIS FATHERS?"

"I am to be gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave..." (Genesis 49:29)

"I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace;" (2Kings 22:20)

The expression "gathered to your fathers" referred to ancient burial practice in Mesopotamia. The body was laid in a family burial cave. After the flesh was consumed, the bones were gathered and placed together with the bones of "the fathers." The bones were "gathered," sometimes in a small area of the cave, later in bone boxes called "ossuaries" carved from sandstone. This was still the practice at the time of Jesus' death.

20. DOESN'T PAUL DESCRIBE A STATE OF BEING "ABSENT FROM THE BODY" OR "OUT OF THE BODY."

II Corinthians 12:2,3 Paul here was speaking of his own condition while in vision.

II Corinthians 5:1-8 This verse is more clearly understood if it is diagramed:

MORTAL BODY	THE NEW IMMORTAL BODY	DEATH (without a body)
"earthly house"	"building of God"	v.4 "not for that we would be <u>unclothed</u> "
"this tabernacle" "mortality" "in the body"	"house not made with hands" "our house from heaven" "absent from the mortal earthly body"	v.3 "being clothed we shall not be found <u>naked</u> "
"absent from the Lord"	"present with the Lord" "clothed with our house" "mortality ... swallowed up of life"	nakedness, non-existence

Compare Other Verses by Paul:

Romans 8:22,23 We wait for "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." [If we are waiting until our bodies are redeemed to be adopted into the heavenly family, then we are not adopted as disembodied spirits immediately after death. We will be received, adopted in heaven, as whole persons with transformed, immortal bodies, when Jesus returns.

Philippians 3:20-21 "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body ..." (Notice: we "wait for the Savior" to return from heaven and transform our bodies.)

Romans 8:11 "He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies."

Why would we want to live in a body again, if we had been doing just fine without one? The answer of course is that without a body, we are not living persons. We do not exist as disembodied spirits.

Philippians 1:22,23 Paul says that he desires most of all "to be with Christ." He is not afraid to die (to "depart" this life). Because he knows that it will seem to him only a moment of sleep, and he will wake again on the resurrection day. But Paul says he will labor on in his tired mortal flesh as long as God wills.

II Timothy 4:8 "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

21. DIDN'T CHRIST PREACH TO SOULS IN HELL?

1 Peter 3:18-20 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

First: The word “hell” is NOT in this passage.

Second: Jesus was “made alive by the Spirit” and He went and preached “by” the Spirit. So the preaching was done by the power of the Spirit. - “the Spirit by which also He went and preached.”

Third: The preaching was done “in the days of Noah.”

Fourth: Noah was filled with the Spirit of Christ, and preached to the wicked people of his time.

(1 Peter 1:11 speaks of “the Spirit of Christ” testifying through Old Testament prophets, of His future sufferings.) These were people whose lives are in bondage to Satan and sin. This is why they are referred to as “spirits in prison.” There are other passages where “spirits in prison” is used in this descriptive way. (See - Psalm 142:7; Isa. 42:6,7; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18).

Fifth: If these people were already dead then there would be no purpose in preaching to them.

(“Those who go down to the pit cannot hope to be helped by your truth” (Isa. 38:18).

Compare:

1 Peter 4:6 The gospel was preached (past tense) to those who are dead (present tense).

It was preached to them in the past, while they were still alive.

22. DOESN'T PAUL SAY THAT GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM ALL THOSE WHO HAVE DIED?

I Thessalonians 4:14 “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him all who sleep in Jesus.”

The Greek word translated “bring” (Strong’s #71) is also translated “take.” This verse may be saying that God will take to heaven with Him, all those who have slept until Jesus returns. Remember those who translated the Bible had preconceived ideas which may have influenced their choice of words.

Another possible meaning of this verse is that God will “bring” from the dead, (just as HE “brought” Jesus from the dead) all those who sleep in Jesus. This is the meaning of “brought again from the dead” in Hebrews 13:20.

A casual reading of I Thessalonians. 4:14 would seem to teach that the righteous dead “which sleep in Jesus” will come with God to the earth with Jesus when He returns. But the next three verses make it clear that this could not possibly be the case. Why? Because the “dead in Christ” are raised from their graves when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” (v.16).

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept... But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

(1 Corinthians 15:23).

Just as the Father raised His son from the dead, so He will also resurrect those who “sleep in Christ.” I believe this is what Paul is saying.

I Thessalonians 4:14, 16 “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (from the dead) with Him (Jesus).” . . . “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

JOHN 14:1-3 “I will come again, and receive you unto myself;” [*Come - then receive.*]

[NOTE: It is important to remember that a “proof text” is one which can only be interpreted one way. If a verse has many possible interpretations, than it is not a “proof text.”

23. DIDN'T JESUS SAY THAT WE WILL NEVER DIE?

We have come back to where we began this study.

John 11:26 “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

NOTE: Jesus is speaking of the “second death” in the lake of fire, which is permanent (Rev. 21:8). From the second death there is no resurrection. Jesus thought of the first death as merely a moment of sleep (Matt. 9:24). In verse 25, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” The one who believes will live again. In many other texts Jesus said He would raise the dead to life “at the last day.” From physical death until the resurrection, the dead ARE sleeping - unconscious - not in heaven, not in hell.

Luke 20:35-36 “Those who are counted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead (the first resurrection - of the just) ... nor can they die anymore.”

Those who come back to life - in the second resurrection (which takes place 1000 years after the first resurrection) are raised with mortal bodies. They CAN die - the “second death” - the death from which there is no resurrection. (Rev. 21:8).

We will cover “the second death” in a future study.

24. WHERE DID THE IDEA COME FROM THAT MAN DOES NOT REALLY DIE?

GENESIS 3:4 “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’”

Satan implied, “God has lied to you. ‘You will be as gods.’ Actually you will go on to a higher sphere of existence.” This has been taught by mystic religions from the beginning of recorded history. Plato taught the Greeks that there is an immortal essence of man that continues to exist after death of the body. As the Jews became Hellenized - this teaching influenced Jewish thought and passed into Christian teaching. The Septuagint translators (300BC) used the Greek word “hades” to translate the Hebrew “sheol.” But the Greek “hades” had a vastly different meaning within Greek culture, than the Hebrew “sheol” - which simply meant “death,” “the abode of the dead” or “the place of no return.”

CONCLUSION

It is especially important to understand the state of man in death, because Satan would use any misunderstanding to his advantage, to come between us and our Father in Heaven. Satan seeks to portray the Father as a cruel tyrant who would allow His own children, wayward as they have been, to be tortured for centuries without end. God is made to seem worse than King Nebuchadnezzar, who threw Daniel's three friends into the fire because they refused to worship his likeness. At least the evil King's fire was short lived.

We are commanded - "love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." (Deut. 6:5). I don't know about you, but I could not "love" someone I believed capable of torturing me for five minutes, much less for eternity.

The concept of "unending conscious torment in fire" has driven many to reject any belief in God. Others have been driven mad with fear. Most are just confused. How can God say that HE "is love" (I John 4:8), and "His mercy endures forever," (Psalm 106:1) and then allow his own children to be tortured without end.

In Scripture -

God alone possesses immortality.

Immortality is promised only to the redeemed.

The immortal are always portrayed as whole embodied persons - never disembodied spirits.

Immortality is always presented as God's gift.

May we be drawn closer to our Savior as we understand more clearly His character of love.