

## Can the Dead Speak to Us?

*Your questions answered concerning death...*

### **Question #1 – Didn't the thief on the cross go to paradise with Christ the day he died? (Luke 23:42,43)**

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**Answer:** The thief asked Jesus to "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Luke 23:42. His focus was the second coming of Christ, not the moment of death. Not only that, Bible evidence implies that the thief didn't even die that Friday (see John 19:31,32). Add to that the fact that Jesus Himself didn't go to paradise that day, and this passage really poses a problem.

How do we know that Jesus didn't go to paradise on Friday? Because on Sunday morning, the day of His resurrection, Jesus met Mary at the garden tomb and said to her: "*Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:*" (John 20:17).

The Father's throne is in paradise (see Rev. 2:7; 22:1,2), and Jesus is now telling Mary that He has not yet gone there, when on Friday it appears that He told thief that they would meet in paradise that day. Since Jesus is "the truth" (John 14:6) and since God "cannot lie" (Tit. 1:2), we know that Jesus was totally honest with both the thief on Friday and Mary on Sunday.

The problem with this passage is with the comma. Punctuation can change the whole meaning of a sentence. The punctuation in our Bibles was added by the translators, who inserted them where they thought they should be. The comma in Luke 23:43 should be placed after the words "to day" rather than before. The text should read:

*"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee to day, thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)*

Jesus is simply saying to the thief, "I assure you today – this day when it doesn't look like I can save anyone; this day when my own people have rejected me; this day of my death – I give you the assurance today that you will be with me in paradise."

If we put the comma in it's correct place, the words of Jesus to the thief in Luke 23, harmonize with everything else that He and the other Bible writers said about death (see John 6:39,40,44,54; John 5:38,39; John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:16,17). Then, we discover that Jesus is completely honest with both the thief on Friday and Mary on Sunday! And when Jesus comes, that repentant thief along with all the other "dead in Christ" will rise to be with Jesus in paradise (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

### **Question #2 – How will God resurrect those who were cremated or blown apart in war?**

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**Answer:** Notice the Bible answer:

*"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. (1 Cor. 15:35-44)*

God will not need any part of our old decayed body to resurrect us with. The grain of wheat we harvest is not the same seed we planted. Just so, the righteous will come forth from the grave with glorious immortal celestial (1 Cor. 15:40) bodies!

God preserves our identity, our personality, our character, but in the resurrection, those who have died will come forth with completely new bodies. Every feature will be so enhanced, so ennobled, so refined and perfected, yet we will still recognize each other!

*"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor. 13:12)*

**Question #3 – Will we have real bodies in heaven? Doesn't the Bible say that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven?**

**Answer:** Often people misquote the words of 1 Cor. 15:50 in order to prove that heavenly beings will not have bodies. The passage states:

*"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor. 15:50)*

The context says just the opposite of what they are trying to prove. It says we will have "spiritual" bodies when we go to heaven (vs. 44). What are spiritual bodies? They are not the mortal, corruptible bodies which we now possess, but rather the new immortal, incorruptible bodies which we receive when Jesus comes.

*"We shall all be changed, in a moment ... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and 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 Cor. 15:51-54)*

*"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil 3:21)*

Christ had a real body when He ascended to heaven after His resurrection (See Luke 24:36-40; 50,51). And "this same Jesus" which was "taken up from you into heaven" will return "in like manner" (Acts 1:9-11), and will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (Phil 3:21). Heaven is a real place for real people with real bodies!

**Question #4 – Doesn't the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) teach that the saved and lost go immediately to their reward at death?**

**Answer:** Jesus is here addressing the Pharisees (vs. 14,15) who were covetous (money-lovers), and emphasizes that the doctrines which they "highly esteemed" (i.e. on divorce - vs. 18 and on death - vs. 19-30) are "an abomination in the sight of God" (vs. 15). The Zondervan Companion Bibles states in the notes on Luke 16:19-31:

*"This commences the second part of the Lord's address to the Pharisees, against their tradition making void God's word as to the dead... It is not called a "parable", because it cites a notable example of the Pharisees' tradition, which had been brought from Babylon." (Companion Study Bible, p. 1483, Zondervan Publishers)*

This story then is an example of what the Pharisees themselves taught concerning the state of the dead, contrary to the testimony of "the law and the prophets" (vs. 16, 31).

*"The Pharisees taught that there were three places [where the righteous would go at death]: (1) Abraham's bosom; (2) "under the throne of glory"; (3) in the garden of Eden (Gr. Paradise). Speaking of death, they would say "this day he sits in Abraham's bosom".... The Pharisees taught that in life two men may be "coupled together", and one sees the other after death, and conversations take place. The Pharisees gave long stories of similar imaginary conversations and discourses." (Companion Study Bible, p. 1484, Zondervan Publishers)*

Jesus is here warning the Pharisees of their fate, by using their own doctrine and tradition. Here are 9 reasons why this story that Jesus told the Pharisees of the rich man and Lazarus, cannot be a literal picture of what takes place at death...

1. A man cannot literally enter into "the bosom" or chest of Abraham. This is obviously a figurative picture of heaven. Since the illustration of heaven is figurative, the illustration of hell must also be figurative.
2. It is impossible for anyone who is literally burning in fire to carry on a conversation.
3. Can those in heaven and hell talk to each other?
4. The rich man is in hell with a body! He has eyes, a tongue, etc. How did his body get into hell fire instead of the grave? Bodies of the dead have been exhumed, and they still had their body parts. Also, Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom with a body. He has fingers. This story could not be literal!
5. A real person suffering in hell would call for far more than a drop of water on someone's finger! How much water would be left on the tip of Lazarus' finger by the time he got through the fire to the rich man? And how much relief would it bring to someone burning in hell? The whole story is unrealistic and figurative.
6. Jesus made no attempt to interpret this story, taken from the Pharisees tradition. He did interpret the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13. In His interpretation of this parable, Jesus plainly said that hell-fire would take place at the end of the world rather than at death (Matt. 13:40-42; 49,50).
7. This example of the Pharisees tradition concerning death, contradicts the rest of the Bible. (See Eccl. 9:5,10; Ps. 6:5; 115:17; 146:4; etc.)
8. Jesus Himself taught that the dead go into their graves to await the resurrection (John 5:38,39).
9. In his epistle, Peter states that the lost will not be punished until the end on "the day of judgment." (2 Pet. 2:9)

Jesus' use of the story of the rich man and Lazarus was given to teach an important lesson, and to expose a "highly esteemed" tradition of the Pharisees, which is an "abomination in the sight of God." The Pharisees believed that riches were a sign of God's blessing, and poverty was a sign of God's curse, and having abandoned the "sure word of prophecy," they were following tradition (Mark 7:7,9) and had adopted the pagan concept of the immortal soul.

In this story, Jesus clearly emphasizes that if a person did not believe Moses and the prophets, a resurrection would not convince them (vs. 29,31). Thus Jesus declared that we must believe Moses and the prophets. Nowhere in the writings of "Moses and the prophets" do people instantly go to heaven or hell at death.

Christ probably chose the name of Lazarus to use in this illustration because later he would actually raise Lazarus from the dead. The climactic point of the entire story is found in verse 31. The Pharisees didn't believe in Jesus even when one named Lazarus was raised to life! (See John 11:1-53).

**Question #5 – What about the soul that departed from Rachel and the child who died?**

**Answer:** The passages referred to are Genesis 35:18 & 1 Kings 17:21,22.

*“And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.” (Gen. 35:18)*

*“And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” (1 Kings 17:21,22)*

Since it is not possible for a soul to exist outside of the body, how can we explain these apparent contradictions? The word “soul” is translated from the Hebrew word “nephesh” which has been translated 118 times in the Old Testament as “life.” If we use the more proper word “life” in reference to Rachel and the child, we discover that everything harmonizes.

*“And it came to pass, as her [life] was in departing, (for she died)...” (Gen. 35:18)*

*“...I pray thee, let this child's [life] come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the [life] of the child came into him again, and he revived.” (1 Kings 17:21,22)*

Concerning these individuals, their life had slipped away, and when the life (nephesh) is gone, they were dead! In the case of the child, his life (nephesh) returned to him when the prophet prayed. The soul (nephesh - life) cannot exist in a conscious state separate from the body (see Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 146:4).

**Question #6 – Does the word “soul” ever mean anything other than a living being?**

**Answer:** Yes, it may mean also 1) life itself, or 2) the mind/intellect. But regardless of which meaning is intended, the soul is still a combination of two things (body and breath), and ceases to exist at death.

**Question #7 – What about the souls crying out from under the altar in Revelation 6:9-10? Doesn't this show that souls do not die?**

**Answer:** The passage in question reads as follows:

*“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given [Gr. assigned] unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Revelation 6:9-11)*

Is this picture literal or symbolic? Suppose that it is literal. If so, we discover that the souls of the most saintly martyrs are not in heaven as many Churches teach, but rather under an alter somewhere. Not only do these saints show signs of being unhappy, they appear to be in torment! What is the cause of their distress? They are crying for vengeance on their persecutors, who for centuries had carried on these persecutions. If we accept the popular doctrine of the soul being immortal, the persecutors of the martyrs should be now suffering untold anguish and torture in the fires of hell. Yet the martyrs aren't satisfied, and cry out for more vengeance! Does this make sense?

Also we notice that quite contrary to Christ's instruction to pray for them which persecute you (Matt. 5:44), these saintly souls are represented as demanding vengeance on their persecutors. Obviously this cannot be a literal picture of what happens after death. The fifth seal (Rev. 6:9-11) is as symbolic as the

preceding four seals. The “souls under the alter” scene follows immediately after “the fourth seal” scene. In the scene which opens with the fourth seal, “Hell” is seen following “a pale horse” ridden by “Death.” (Rev. 6:7,8). Both these pictures (the 4th and 5th seals) are symbolic.

What does the symbolism of the fifth seal (the souls under the alter) represent? Since an alter is a place where sacrifices are made (where animals died), the alter in this symbolic picture must be the place where the martyrs sacrificed their lives for the Word of God. Their lives (their souls – soul in the Bible generally means “life” or the “living being”), cry out to God for vengeance just as the blood of Abel who was martyred by Cain cried out to God (Gen. 4:9,10).

If this is not figurative language and if souls are disembodied, how do they wear robes? Clearly the picture here is not a literal representation of what happens to the righteous dead. It is figurative.

**Question #8 – What does Paul mean in 2 Corinthians 5:8, when he talks about being absent from the body and present with the Lord?**

**Answer:** Before seeking an answer to this question, let’s first read the passage.

*“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:... We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5:6,8)*

In verses 1-8, Paul is contrasting the present mortal state with the future immortal life in heaven. Notice the expressions he uses for the two conditions...

<u>Present Life</u>	<u>Future life</u>
earthly house.....	building of God
this tabernacle.....	house not made with hands
mortality.....	our house from heaven
in the [mortal] body.....	absent from the [mortal] body
absent from the Lord.....	present with the Lord

He also speaks of being clothed with “our house which is from heaven” (vs. 2), and again, he longs “that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (vs. 4). But the key to the entire discourse lies in the description of a third condition. After desiring to be clothed with immortality Paul states that “being clothed we shall not be found **naked**” (v.3). Putting it yet another way he said, “not for that we would be unclothed...” (v.4).

Clearly the naked or unclothed state was neither mortality nor immortality but death and the grave. Paul realized that one did not pass instantly from being clothed with this tabernacle into being clothed with our house from heaven. Death and the grave came in between, and he referred to it, as being unclothed and naked. In his previous letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that “mortality” would be “swallowed up” at the resurrection when Jesus comes.

*“We shall all be changed, in a moment .... at the last trump ... the dead shall be raised incorruptible ... this mortal must put on immortality ... then ... Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Cor. 15:51-54).*

Paul expected “to be present with the Lord” at the **second coming**.

*“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout ... and the dead in Christ shall ... and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:16,17)*

Jesus also said we will be with Him when He comes again to “receive us unto Himself” (John 14:1-3).

**Question #9 – In 2 Corinthians 12:2-3 Paul speaks of the possibility of being “out of body,” showing that his soul or spirit was independent of his body. How do you explain this?**

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**Answer:** Was Paul referring to death in this passage? He is referring to an experience that took place “above fourteen years ago.” Does this mean the he died and was resurrected at that time? There is nothing in the context or anywhere else in the writings of the Scriptures to bring us to such a conclusion. So what is Paul talking about?

The previous verse introduces the subject. He is talking about “*visions and revelations of the Lord.*” (v.1). Virtually all Bible commentators believe that Paul is describing his own experience, because he spoke in the context of his own revelations. He was concerned that no one think he was glorying or boasting about his visions. For this reason he probably ascribed the experience to a man he knew.

What he saw was so real and vivid that he was not sure if he had actually been transported to heaven for a short period, or that he had simply seen a vision, and heard in that vision the revelation which it was “not lawful” for him “to utter.” If he was not literally taken to heaven in body, he seemed to be there, nevertheless. He was not puzzled over whether he had died or not. He was only uncertain as to how he was able to see paradise in that vision. The physical impressions seemed as though he were “out of body,” in a way of speaking. He uses a similar expression in writing to the Colossian church:

*“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” (Col. 2:5)*

No one interprets this to mean that some immortal soul or spirit left Paul’s body to be with friends. We sometimes ourselves use similar expressions when circumstances prevent us from being with friends or relatives on a certain occasion. We may say, “I’ll be with you in spirit.” We simply mean that our thoughts, sympathies, and feelings are with them. Paul is not talking about disembodied spirits, nor even about death. He is talking about being in vision.

**Question #10 – Can you please explain 1 Peter 3:18-20?**

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*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” (1 Pet. 3:18-20)*

Some have concluded from this passage that only Jesus’ flesh died and that, before His bodily resurrection, His spirit traveled to where the souls of the lost are in prison (be that hell, purgatory, or limbo) and preached to them. This is far from what the text actually says. *Notice these facts...*

1. It was Jesus who died, not merely His flesh. This point is vital to Christianity, because our whole salvation depends upon the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:13,14). If Christ did not really die, then we must pay the penalty for our sins (“the wages of sin is death.” Rom.6:23) by ourselves. Peter makes it very plain that Jesus was “put to death in the flesh.” Christ’s death was complete, paying the full penalty for sin.
2. Christ was “quickened” by the Spirit. The word “quickened” means “to be resurrected” or “to make alive.” Christ was made alive again (resurrected) by the Holy Spirit. The Bible says:

*“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom. 8:11)*

3. Peter states that it was by the Holy Spirit (“by which Spirit...” – that is, the same Spirit that resurrected Jesus), that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison. It was through the Holy Spirit that Christ was appealing to the antediluvians.
4. The term “spirits in prison” referred to do not mean disembodied ghosts, but rather individuals in bondage to sin. Notice: “*Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.*” (Ps. 142:7) David is speaking of himself here, not some invisible spirit or soul.
5. The “prison” that Peter speaks of in 1 Peter 3:19 is NOT hell or purgatory. There is not a single Bible reference that teaches that prison means hellfire. In Isaiah 61, we find reference to those who are in prison.

*“The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” (Isa. 61:1; see also Isa. 42:6,7)*

In Luke 4:18 Jesus cited these words of Isaiah 61:1 to refer to His ministry. Throughout His life Jesus proclaimed “liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

From these verses we can see that to be bound in prison does not refer to a place of burning, but rather to be bound by the chains of evil habits and sin.

6. The key question to this whole passage in 1 Peter is this: When did Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, preach to those antediluvians who were in bondage to sin? The answer is contained in the text itself:

*“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” (1 Pet. 3:20)*

Jesus did not go to the spirit world to preach to people burning in hell, but by the Holy Spirit (Gen. 6:3), preached through Noah to the people who lived before the flood (“while the ark was a preparing”), and brought eight of them out of the prison house of sin into the ark of salvation.

### **Question #11 – Can you please Explain 1 Peter 4:6?**

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*“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Pet. 4:5,6)*

The context of 1 Peter 4:1-6 seems to imply the spiritual rather than the physical. Peter is referring to spiritual death rather than physical death. In the first verse he states that those who have “suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin.” Paul echoes the same thought in Romans 6. “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” (Rom. 6:7). Paul is clearly speaking of the spiritual (death to sin) rather than the physical (physical death). He states: “*How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” (Rom. 6:2)

Peter seems to be emphasizing the same thought in 1 Pet 4:1-6. In verses 2-4 he speaks of the sins that the true Christian has died to, and of the reaction of the unbelievers (those alive to sin) “they think it strange.” In this context we understand Peter to be saying,

*“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead [to sin - spiritual death], that they might be judged according to men in the flesh [by their words and actions], but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Pet. 4:5,6) (See Rom. 8 referring to those who live according to the spirit rather than following the fleshly lusts - sins)*

Even if Peter is speaking of physical death, he did not imply that the gospel was then being preached to the souls of the dead, as some believe. He said the gospel “*was preached*” (past tense) to “*them that are dead*” (present tense). The preaching was done when they were yet alive, and they will be judged on the basis of how they lived “according to men in the flesh,” or according to the deeds they did while living. Peter is undoubtedly talking about Christians here, who chose to walk not after their fleshly lusts (sins), but rather live according to God in the spirit.” (See Rom. 8)

It would be ridiculous to preach to people that are physically dead. It’s hard enough to preach to those who are alive. It takes intelligence and knowledge to understand the gospel, and such intelligence is possessed only by those who are alive because the Bible states: “*For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing.*” (Eccl. 9:5)

**Question #12 – Can you please explain John 11:26?**

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*“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” (John 11:26)*

This refers not to the first death, which all people die (Heb. 9:27; 1 Cor. 15:22), but to the second death, which only the wicked die and from which there is no resurrection (Rev. 2:11; 21:8).

**Question #13 – Doesn’t Matthew 10:28 prove that the soul is undying?**

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*“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matt. 10:28)*

The last half of the verse proves that souls do die. The word “soul” here means life and refers to eternal life, which is a gift (Rom. 6:23) that will be given to the righteous at the last day (John 6:54). Though men may kill our bodies, no one can take away the gift of eternal life that God bestows. God’s promise to us is: “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*” (Rev. 2:10)

**Question #14 – Does the “spirit” of man only refer to the breath of life?**

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**Answer:** It sometimes refers to his thoughts, feeling, and emotions. At death however, the Bible states:

*“His thoughts perish” (Ps. 146:4)*

*“The dead know not anything (Eccl. 9:5)*

*“Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished.” (Eccl 9:6).*

*“There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” (Eccl. 9:10)*

*“For in death there is no remembrance of thee [God].” (Ps. 6:5)*

*“His sons come to honor, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.” (Job 14:21)*

Man’s spirit cannot “live” on anywhere separate from the body.

**Question #15 – What about Moses and Elijah who met with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration?**

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**Answer:** On the mount of transfiguration, “two men ... Moses and Elias ... appeared in glory.” (Luke 9:27-36; see also Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8). These were not spirits or disembodied souls, but “two men.” Elijah never died. He was translated without seeing death (2 Kings 2:11). Moses “died” and was “buried” (Deut. 34:5,6). Yet the book of Jude reveals that Michael came from heaven and, “contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses” (Jude 9). Moses was to be resurrected. The devil



protested. Then Michael said, "the Lord rebuke thee." Paul states that death had never been broken "from Adam to Moses" (Rom. 5:14). Obviously with Moses, death was broken. Moses was resurrected.

Thus it was a living resurrected Moses and a translated Elijah that appeared on the mount. Immediately prior to this appearance, Jesus had told his disciples that they would soon "see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27). On the mount they saw it in miniature. Jesus Christ was glorified as Savior. Moses represented all the saints who would be resurrected, while Elijah represented those who would be translated without seeing death at his second coming of Jesus. Both groups are described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

### Question #16 – Can you please explain 1 Cor. 5:5?

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*"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. 5:5)*

The person under consideration had been guilty of unspeakable moral degeneracy. Paul's recommendation is to disfellowship the man from the body of Christ. He used words that cannot be misconstrued: "purge out," "put away," "not to company with," and "deliver such an one to Satan."

Paul used this strong language because the man had chosen to follow Satan. The church was merely recognizing, and finally making official, what the man had openly decided and declared by his conduct. There was no thought to consign him to the devil, but rather to register on a temporary basis that the man preferred Satan's path to the path of Christ.

What did Paul feel might be the result of this drastic action? His hope was for the "destruction of the flesh." Paul's favorite expression for the unconverted was "the flesh." To the Romans he wrote, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). Perhaps the shock of being expelled from the fellowship of the church would turn the sinner to repentance and cause him to crucify the flesh, thereby destroying the gross works of the flesh which had brought on his condemnation. Thus his spirit could be transformed, and he could be born again of the spirit (see John 3:1-8). He could then be restored to church fellowship, and saved at the coming of Jesus.

### Question #17 – Didn't king Saul see the Prophet Samuel come back from the dead?

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**Answer:** The passages referred to is 1 Samuel 28:14

*"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"*

The Bible Narrative simply describes this spiritualistic séance in terms of the suppositions of the witch and of Saul. This is a literary rule known as the language of appearance. When the story says "Samuel," we may understand it to mean simply the devil-generated apparition that doubtless appeared, and which they supposed was Samuel. **The writer merely tells the story from the viewpoint of the woman and the deceived king and what they thought they saw and heard.** To make the deception more convincing and real, the evil spirit quoted some of the actual words spoken by Samuel while he was alive. (Compare 1 Samuel 28:17, 18 with chapter 15:1-9, 28)

*The following points are given to show why the above conclusion is the correct one and why this could not be the actual prophet Samuel coming back from the grave...*

1. Wizards had been sentenced to death & banned from the land (1Sam.28:3, Lev.20:27). It is unreasonable to suppose that God would communicate with Saul by a means that He had forbidden.

2. Bible tells us that God had departed from Saul & would not communicate with him (1Sam.28:15).
3. The story says nothing about Samuel coming down from heaven. Samuel was supposedly "brought up." Other expressions in this passage include: "ascending out of the earth"; "coming up", and "bring up" (v.13-15). Is this where the righteous dead are? Down in the earth? Not according to those who believe in the immortality of the soul. Can "ascending out of the earth" mean descending out of heaven?
4. Samuel is described as an old man covered with a mantle. Is this the way immortal souls appear? And where did the soul get the body? As it is commonly believed, they are supposed to be disembodied. Was there a resurrection? Did God obey the call of the witch and raise up Samuel? If not, can Satan raise the dead? The answer is obviously no!
5. The apparition of Samuel told Saul, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" (1 Samuel 28:19). Saul committed suicide on the battlefield the next day. Where did the holy Samuel dwell, if the wicked, lost, Saul was to go to the same place?
6. The Bible never says that Saul saw Samuel. He received his information secondhand from the witch, and only concluded it was Samuel from her description. If this had been a genuine appearance of Samuel, Saul would have seen him. Instead, he asked the witch, "What sawest thou?" The truth is that the devil deceived the old woman, and she deceived Saul. It was nothing more than a devil-generated séance. Saul saw nothing, but from the witch's description he "perceived" that it was Samuel. What he perceived was only in his distraught imagination, from the witch's description. He had fallen under the spell of the evil spirit. Satan can transform into an angel of light! (2Cor.11:13-15)
7. Further evidence that the spirit was not Samuel, but an evil spirit impersonating him, is to be found in the warning that it gave the woman concerning Saul. Before speaking to Saul, it put her on her guard by telling her that her guest was King Saul, the enemy of all such as herself. Saul in his earlier years of his reign had destroyed those practicing such things and the wizards out of the land (1 Samuel 28:3). The real Samuel would not speak to protect an evil woman and to assist her in her unholy communion with evil spirits.
8. The enormity of Saul's sin is revealed in these words: "So Saul died for his transgression... and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; and not of the Lord: therefore he slew him" (1Chronicles 10:13-14). At the forbidden séance, Saul was on Satan's ground. The message that came to Saul was not of God or one of His saints, but from Satan or one of his demons, who counterfeited the dead prophet.

### **Question #18 – Didn't Stephen's Spirit go to heaven when he died?**

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**Answer:** The passages referred to is Acts 7:59

*"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

What happened to Stephen's spirit when he died? The same thing that happens to everyone else's spirit when they die. As Stephen was being stoned, he called upon God saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Your spirit is simply the spark of life that belongs to God. You lose it when you die. When the Bible says that the breath of life returns to God, it does not say that it carries with it any portion of your mental capacity. Human consciousness is a physiological process that is dependent upon nerve and tissue. In reference to man, the Bible never speaks of any consciousness of disembodied spirits. In fact v.60 said that Stephen fell asleep referring to death.

## Question #19 – What about Paul’s desire to depart from the body and to be with Christ?

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**Answer:** The passages referred to is Phillipians 1:22-24

*“But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. ”*

Another passage which has confused some people is **Philippians 1:20-25**. Some have used these verses to promote a doctrine which is contrary to Paul’s own clear teachings on the subject of death. But when we look at it objectively we find the passage to be fully consistent with the rest of the Bible. Highlighting a few phrases in the passage will show us Paul’s train of thought. He is discussing my earnest expectation, my hope, what I shall choose, having a desire, and what is more needful. These are not expressions one uses when presenting a doctrinal discourse. He is opening to his readers his deepest personal aspirations. Paul’s greatest desire in this passage is that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. The problem is that he cannot tell which is best, to live or to die. He wants to do that which will best glorify Christ.

He longs to be with Christ. He knows that he will be with Him in the next life. This thought is wonderful to him. Yet, realizing that his labors are still needed in this life, he concludes, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith. The phrase which some people have stumbled over is Paul’s desire to depart, and to be with Christ. Notice that he does not say that he will depart and immediately be with Christ. Neither is he discussing a bodiless presence with Him, for his desire was that Christ shall be magnified in my body.

For the purposes of his present discussion he sees no need to digress into the details of the decomposition of his body, the oblivion of death’s sleep, and the specifics of the resurrection. That is not the subject at hand. Yet, even so, the words he uses describe the experience of death most explicitly. To the individual’s consciousness, death does not register at all. Thousands of years may pass. The dead know nothing of it. Their first conscious moment at the resurrection knows of no lapse since their last conscious moment before death. After Paul’s death, the next thing he would know, he would be with Christ. His description is experiential rather than technical, and thus perfectly harmonizes with his direct doctrinal instruction on the state of the dead.

When did Paul expect to be with Christ? In 2 Thessalonians 2:1 he clearly explains that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him take place at the same time. In Colossians 3:4 Paul says, When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. We will not be with Christ in glory until His appearing, His glorious return in power and majesty. Paul also speaks of the appearing of Christ in 2 Timothy 4:8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Paul realized that his crown of righteousness would be laid up in store for him, until the coming of Christ, not to be received until that day.

## Question #20 – What about those who practice baptism for the dead?

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**Answer:** The passages referred to is 1 Corinthians 15:29 which reads...

*“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?  
Why are they then baptized for the dead?”*

Does Paul teach in 1 Corinthians 15:29 that we should be baptized for the dead? No, he does not. This context of this chapter is discussing the resurrection. Whatever conclusion we reach as to the meaning of the verse, we must recognize it as an argument in favor of the resurrection. The line of reasoning goes as follows: Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? He is promoting, not consciousness during death, but resurrection after death. Paul here may have been referring to a pagan custom of being baptized for the dead. Notice that he uses the word “they” rather than we. He does not say that we should be baptized for the dead. He simply says that “they” are. Without actually endorsing their practice, he was saying, Even the pagans who are baptized for the dead believe there will be a resurrection. Else why would “they” be baptized for them? The argument is similar to verses 16-18 where Paul says, “For if the dead rise not... then they also which are fallen asleep... are perished.” The only hope for the dead is in the resurrection. The Bible clearly teaches that a man must personally repent, believe in Christ, confess his sins, and be baptized in order to be saved (Acts 2:38; John 3:16; 1 John 1:9). You can only work out your own salvation (Philippians 2:12). They shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness (Ezekiel 14:20). None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him (Psalm 49:7). The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (Ezekiel 18:20). Those who die in sin have no more opportunity to repent. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Now, while we are still alive, while the blood still flows in our veins, while we are still capable of responding to Christ’s invitation, now is the time for us to give ourselves fully to Jesus.

### **Question #22 – Are there other passages that refer to death as being a sleep?**

Yes! In fact, the term "sleep" for death occurs some 66 times in 17 different books of the Bible. This is clearly the Biblical term for death. Look up the rest of the texts that mention, "sleep" as death. They are as follows...

Deut. 31:16—“Thou (Moses) shall sleep with thy fathers.”  
2 Sam. 7:12--"Thou (David) shalt sleep with thy fathers,"  
1 Kings 1:21--"The king shall sleep with his fathers."  
1 Kings 2:10--"So David slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 11:21--"David slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 11:43--"Solomon slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 14:20--"He (Jeroboam) slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 14:31--"Rehoboam slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 15:8--"Abijam slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 15:24--"Asa slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 16:6--"Baasha slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 16:28--"Omri slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 22:40--"Ahab slept with his fathers."  
1 Kings 22:50--"Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers."

2 Kings 8:24--"Joram slept with his fathers."  
2 Kings 10:35--"Jehu slept with his fathers."  
2 Kings 13:9--"Jehoahaz slept with his fathers."  
Job 3:13--"I should have slept."  
Job 7:21--"Now shall I sleep."  
Psalm 76:5--"They have slept their sleep."  
Jeremiah 51:39--"And sleep a perpetual sleep."  
Daniel 12:2--"Them that sleep in the dust."  
Matthew 9:24--"Is not dead, but sleepeth."  
John 11:11--"Lazarus sleepeth."  
1 Corinthians 15:6--"Some are fallen asleep."  
1 Thessalonians 4:13--"Concerning them which are asleep."  
2 Peter 3:4—“Since the fathers fell asleep”

2Kings 13:13, 2Kings 14:16, 22, 29, 15:7, 22, 38, 16:20, 20:21, 21:18, 24:6, 2Chronicles 9:31, 12:16, 14:1 16:13, 21:1, 26:2, 23, 27:9, 28:27, 32:33, 33:20, Job 14:12, Psalms 13:3, 76:6, 90:5, Jeremiah 51:57, Matthew 27:52, Mark 5:39, Luke 8:52, Acts 7:60, 13:36, 1Corinthians 11 :30, 15:18, 20, 1Thessalonians 4:14-15.

## Near Death Experiences Explained

Science cannot ultimately explain why some people have near-death experiences (NDEs). That's not to say that current scientific explanations are incorrect, but NDEs are complex, subjective and emotionally charged. Further, many aspects of NDEs cannot be tested. We can't run a test to determine if someone actually visited Heaven and met God or purposely take someone to the brink of death and then resuscitate them in a lab to test their out-of-body perception. Nevertheless, medical science offers compelling evidence that many aspects of NDEs are physiological and psychological in nature. Scientists have found that the drugs ketamine and PCP can create sensations in users that are nearly identical to many NDEs. In fact, some users think they are actually dying while on the drug. The mechanism behind some of these strange experiences is in the way our brains process sensory information. What we see as "reality" around us is only the sum of all the sensory information our brain is receiving at any given moment. When you look at a computer screen, the light from the screen hits your retinas, and information is sent to the appropriate areas of the brain to interpret the light patterns into something meaningful -- in this case, the words you are currently reading. An even more complex system of nerves and muscle fibers allows your brain to know where your body is in relation to the space around it. Close your eyes and raise your right hand until it is level with the top of your head. How do you know where your hand is without looking at it? This sensory system allows you to know where your hand is even when your eyes are closed.

**Trauma affecting functional areas of the brain, such as the somatosensory and visual cortexes, could cause hallucinations that get interpreted as NDEs.**

Now imagine that all your senses are malfunctioning. Instead of real sensory input from the world around you, your brain is receiving faulty information, possibly because of drugs, or some form of trauma that is causing your brain to shut down. What you perceive as a real experience is actually your brain trying to interpret this information. Some have theorized that "neural noise," or an overload of information sent to the brain's visual cortex, creates an image of a bright light that gradually grows larger. The brain may interpret this as moving down a dark tunnel. The body's spatial sense is prone to malfunction during a near-death experience as well. Again, your brain interprets faulty information about where the body is in relation to the space around it. The result is the sensation of leaving the body and flying around the room. Combined with other effects of trauma and oxygen deprivation in the brain (a symptom in many near-death situations), this leads to the overall experience of floating into space while looking down at your own body, and then leaving to float down a tunnel. The peaceful, calm sensation felt during NDEs may be a coping mechanism triggered by increased levels of endorphins produced in the brain during trauma. Many people experience a strange sense of detachment and a lack of emotional response during traumatic events (whether or not they were related to a near-death experience). This is the same effect. NDEs that include visits to Heaven or meetings with God could involve a combination of several factors. Faulty sensory input, oxygen deprivation and endorphin-induced euphoria create a surreal, though realistic, experience. When the subject recalls the encounter later, it has passed through the filter of his conscious mind. Bizarre experiences that seem unexplainable become spirit beings, other dimensions and conversations with God. The experiences of people whose out-of-body adventures allow them to see and hear events that their unconscious body shouldn't be able to perceive are more difficult to explain. However, it is plausible that unconscious people can still register sensory cues and prior knowledge and incorporate them into their NDE. The bottom line is that science has a difficult time grasping death -- the medical community has struggled with specific definitions for clinical death, organ death and brain death for decades. For every aspect of an NDE, there is at least one scientific explanation for it.

Based upon the clear teaching of the Bible that there is no consciousness in death (Ecc.9:5-6), it is safe to conclude that those who claimed to have consciousness in death, didn't actually die. Near death is not the same thing as death. Subjective experiences of consciousness in death must be based upon perception rather than reality. That is not to say that God cannot communicate with someone that comes close to death. Surely He can. But Satan too can deceive one in this state of mind. Thus, we must test every experience by the Word of God rather than the testing the Word of God by our personal experiences. Satan can manipulate our senses but God's Word is the sure test of truth!