

State Of The Dead

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

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By George Lujack

Do the souls of the righteous go to heaven upon death, or are the dead saints awaiting the resurrection as they rest in peace unconsciously in death? Will the souls of the dead return back to the world to re-inhabit their earthly bodies? This article will address this emotionally contentious issue, arguing that no one has yet ascended to heaven, with the exception of Yeshua (Jesus).

Christian ministers, throughout millennia, have comforted many grieving believers' families by telling them that their recently deceased loved ones have gone on to a better place, heaven, and that they are with God now. Often the impulse to tell this story is to alleviate grief and comfort those who are mourning. A lie or untruth is still a lie or untruth however, and as such shouldn't be told no matter what the rationale is, even if it is to comfort the grief stricken.

WHY IS HEAVEN UPON DEATH TAUGHT AND BELIEVED?

People do not want to believe in death, but rather in the immortality of the soul.

GENESIS 3:1-5:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "YOU WILL NOT SURELY DIE. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

People desire to believe in the lie the serpent told Eve in the Garden of Eden with a twist: "You will surely not die. Your soul will instantly leave your body and live in heaven, with God." People want to believe their deceased loved ones are dwelling securely in heaven with God, rather than the truth that they are dead in their graves awaiting their resurrection.

IS ABSENT FROM THE BODY, IN DEATH, TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD, IN HEAVEN?

Many have falsely believed that the Apostle Paul wrote to be absent in the body (in death) meant to be present with the Lord (in heaven), by imposing their belief upon Scripture.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9:

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be ABSENT FROM THE BODY AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

The true meaning of what Paul wrote was to be absent from the body (in deep prayer and meditation) was to be spiritually present with the Lord.

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-23:

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Messiah (Christ) will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Messiah (Christ), and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Messiah (Christ), which is far better.

Did Paul think that to die was gain, because he would go straight to heaven and instantaneously be with the Messiah (Christ)? No. What Paul was saying is that he was to live for Messiah (Christ), and bear fruit through his labor for God's kingdom, or die for Messiah (Christ) in martyrdom. Paul knew to die for Messiah (Christ) meant eventual gain in God's kingdom. Paul so desired not to be in this world that he thought it better to die for Messiah (Christ) and gain through receiving the martyr's reward in God's kingdom. Paul knew that when he died, his next conscious moment would be standing before Messiah (Christ).

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING AND CANNOT PRAISE OR SERVE GOD

PSALM 115:17:

The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence.

ECCLESIASTES 9:5:

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing.

The dead cannot serve or please God and the dead know nothing, as they are in a state of unconsciousness in death. If the dead went directly to heaven upon death, it could not be written in Scripture that the dead know nothing. The dead know nothing, because they are dead and void of life. The dead are no longer conscious and aware. The dead are not alive, have no consciousness, and are therefore lifeless by definition.

MAN WAS CREATED A LIVING BEING / SOUL / SPIRIT

GENESIS 2:7:

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 being* (*soul KJV).

Man was created as a living being / soul / spirit. The soul does not live apart from the body, nor does the body live apart from the soul. When a man dies, he dies body and soul. The soul is not immortal; his soul dies with him.

OUR SOULS ARE IN GOD'S HANDS WHEN WE DIE

LUKE 23:46:

And when Yeshua (Jesus) had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.

When Yeshua (Jesus) died, His spirit was in God's care until God resurrected Him 3-days later. Likewise, the souls of the dead are in God the Father's care until He resurrects the dead on the last day.

IS THE SOUL IMMORTAL? CAN THE SOUL DIE?

The soul is not immortal. The souls of unrepentant sinners will perish and die.

EZEKIEL 18:4, 20:

The soul who sins shall die.

LUKE 13:3,5:

"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

MATTHEW 10:28:

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to DESTROY BOTH SOUL AND BODY in hell."

JAMES 5:20:

Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a SOUL FROM DEATH and cover a multitude of sins.

All the souls of the dead will be resurrected from the first death. Souls who are judged to hell will die and cease to exist. They will not suffer eternal torment. The righteous will inherit eternal life and the unrighteous, those who refuse to repent, will be judged to die the second death (Revelation 2:11, 20:6,14, 21:8).

NO ONE, EXCEPT YESHUA (JESUS), HAS ASCENDED TO HEAVEN

JOHN 3:13:

"No one has ascended to heaven except He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man."

Yeshua's (Jesus') own testimony in Scripture affirms that there has been no human being on Earth, who has lived and died, who has ascended to heaven.

JOHN 11:11-14:

Yeshua (Jesus) said to them, **“Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”** Then His disciples said, **“Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.”** However, Yeshua (Jesus) spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Yeshua (Jesus) said to them plainly, **“Lazarus is dead.”**

JOHN 11:20-24:

Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Yeshua (Jesus) was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Yeshua (Jesus), **“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”**

Yeshua (Jesus) said to her, **“Your brother will rise again.”**

Martha said to Him, **“I know that he will rise again IN THE RESURRECTION AT THE LAST DAY.”**

Martha knew Lazarus did not go to heaven when he died. She also believed the dead, including Lazarus, would live again at the resurrection.

Yeshua (Jesus) compared Lazarus' death to sleep. Yeshua (Jesus) did not call Lazarus' soul down from heaven and back into his body, but instead He “woke” him. Yeshua (Jesus) resurrected Lazarus from the unconsciousness of death.

DID ENOCH AND ELIJAH ASCEND TO HEAVEN?

Many have assumed that Scripture declares that Enoch and Elijah were taken into God's heavenly kingdom. This belief should be rejected based on Yeshua's (Jesus') testimony that no one has ascended to heaven, but Himself (John 3:13).

GENESIS 5:24:

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch “was not.” Enoch was not found among the dead. God took Enoch *somewhere*, and buried him *someplace*. Many assume that God took Enoch to heaven, to dwell with Him, but that is not what Scripture actually says [1].

2 KINGS 2:1,11:

And it came to pass, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

...

Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The account of Elijah being taken up by a whirlwind, into ‘heaven,’ does not mean Elijah entered paradise. 2 Kings 2:1 and 11 should be understood to mean that Elijah was taken up into the heaven or clouds, which is often used in Scripture to describe the firmament or sky (Genesis 1:8).

2 KINGS 2:16:

Then they said to him, “Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of YHWH (the Lord) has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.”

It was believed by the men who witnessed Elijah being taken up by a chariot of fire, that the Spirit of YHWH (the Lord) took Elijah up into the sky and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley (2 Kings 2:16), and did not take Elijah to dwell with Him in paradise.

Elijah could not have gone to heaven, the paradise dwelling place of God, as Yeshua (Jesus) declared that no man had yet ascended to heaven (John 3:13).

Elijah likely spent the rest of his life on Earth dwelling with God and serving him, before dying on His mountain.

DID YESHUA (JESUS) DECLARE MOSES, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB TO BE AMONG THE LIVING?

MARK 12:25-27:

“FOR WHEN THEY RISE FROM THE DEAD, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. BUT CONCERNING THE DEAD, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? HE IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”

Many are greatly mistaken in believing that this passage means that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are LIVING in heaven. That is not what Yeshua (Jesus) actually said. What He did say about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob WHO WERE DEAD, is that God is not the God of the dead (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), but the living. What God meant when He spoke to Moses through the burning bush, is that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but now they are dead and He is not the God of the dead, but the living.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ARE DEAD. God is not God of the dead (including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). That is, God does not rule over the dead in their state of sleep, but He is the God of the living. When the dead rise from their graves, (including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), *then* God will resume His role as being God over Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as they will no longer be dead, but alive again after their resurrection.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all died before the birth of Messiah (Christ). Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) said plainly that no one had ascended to heaven. Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not living in heaven, because no one had yet ascended to heaven when Yeshua (Jesus) spoke these words:

JOHN 3:13:

“NO ONE has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man.”

DID THE CRIMINAL (ALLEGED THIEF) ON THE CROSS GO TO PARADISE?

The English translators made a simple error in comma placement that has led many to falsely believe that the thief on the cross went with Yeshua (Jesus) to paradise on the day they both died [2].

COMMON INCORRECT (comma placement):

LUKE 23:43:

And Yeshua (Jesus) said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you(,) today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

PROPER CORRECT (comma placement):

LUKE 23:43:

And Yeshua (Jesus) said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you today(,) you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Yeshua (Jesus) did not go to paradise the day He died. Yeshua (Jesus) was crucified, was unconscious in death for three days and three nights, and was then resurrected. Upon His resurrection, He first spoke with Miriam (Mary) Magdalene:

JOHN 20:17:

YESHUA (Jesus) said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I HAVE NOT YET ASCENDED TO MY FATHER; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”

The thief on the cross will be with Yeshua (Jesus) in paradise, in the future, after he is resurrected to everlasting life.

WAS MIRIAM (MARY) ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN?

There is no Scripture verse, at all, to support the Catholic doctrine that Mary, the mother of Yeshua (Jesus) was assumed into heaven. The Catholic faith is a deceptive faith that often plays with words and uses language confusion to deceive the Catholic flock. The Catholic Church is well aware of Yeshua’s (Jesus’) declaration that no one has ascended to heaven (John 3:13). So, rather than say that Mary ASCENDED to heaven, they declare that she was ASSUMED into heaven, as if that verbiage makes a difference. The Catholic Church changes terms in an attempt to twist and change Scripture to accommodate their faith. They spin falsehoods without any Scripture support. Catholics may call a Catholic divorce an annulment, but it is still a divorce.

KING DAVID DID NOT ASCEND TO HEAVEN

ACTS 2:29,34:

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

...

For David did not ascend into the heavens.

YESHUA (JESUS) WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN TO THE CLOUDS;
THE DEAD WILL RISE; THEY WILL NOT DESCEND

MARK 12:25-26:

“For when they RISE FROM THE DEAD, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. BUT CONCERNING THE DEAD, THAT THEY RISE...”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-23:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruit of those who have fallen asleep [DIED]. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah (Christ) all SHALL BE MADE ALIVE. But each one in his own order: Messiah (Christ) the first-fruit, AFTERWARD those who are Messiah’s (Christ’s) AT HIS COMING.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-53:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those carried up who are asleep [DEAD]. FOR THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. AND THE DEAD IN MESSIAH (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.

Scripture proclaims that Yeshua (Jesus) will descend from heaven and the dead will rise from death. The souls of the dead will not descend from heaven, with Yeshua (Jesus), and go back into their earthly bodies. The dead in Messiah (Christ) at His coming will rise from sleep (death) and shall be made alive, will be changed into incorruptible beings, and then ascend to the clouds to be forever with Yeshua (Jesus).

Yeshua (Jesus) will gather His risen and raptured saints, and afterward, when He returns to Earth to establish His millennium kingdom, He will return with them (Revelation 20:4-6). Until the dead are raised in their resurrection, their souls remain in a state of death, resting in peace, unconscious, and unaware of the passage of time.

1. “Was Enoch Taken to Heaven?,” Heaven & Hell What Does the Bible Really Teach?, Beyond Today, United Church of God, January 25, 2011,
< <http://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/heaven-and-hell-what-does-the-bible-really-teach/was-enoach-taken-to> >.

2. “The Thief on the Cross,” Heaven & Hell What Does the Bible Really Teach?, Beyond Today, United Church of God, January 25, 2011,
< <http://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/heaven-and-hell-what-does-the-bible-really-teach/the-thief-on-the-cross> >.