

Where Do We Go When We Die?



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE? Do we go to heaven? Join our ancestors? Reincarnate? A famous actress once told of her near-death experience, describing other places she visited while out of her body. Many others have described the sensation of leaving their bodies, looking down at themselves, and travelling down a tunnel toward a light.

Are these experiences genuine? Are they from God, or is another force at work? Is the soul really leaving the body? Can we communicate with the dead? God has given us the answers to these questions in His Word.

Thoughts to Remember:

- Four basic facts apply to every near-death experience (NDE):
 - None of the people who had NDEs actually died. They did not experience either of the two deaths of medical science, clinical death and brain death.
 - Many NDEs precisely resemble hallucinations. University professor Timothy Leary reported of his experience taking a hallucinogenic drug: "... After eating certain hallucinogenic mushrooms, I realized that I had died...I could look back and see my body in bed." Aldous Huxley described his experience with mescaline: "My body seems to have dissociated itself almost completely from my mind...It was odd, of course, to feel that 'I' was not the same as these arms and legs 'out there.'" Scientists reported on purposely inducing hallucinations as an experiment. One subject said: "I felt as though I was looking down at myself, as though I was way out here in space...I felt sort of separated."
 - Out-of-body NDEs contradict Scripture. "As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return. He will never come to his house again" (Job 7:9).
 - Many NDE details are frighteningly similar to the teachings of spiritualism. Reports of going through dark tunnels toward a light and seeing loved ones or friends abound.
- What exactly does spiritualism teach, and how is it not in harmony with Scripture?
 - Spiritualism teaches that the dead are not dead. The first lie Satan told on this earth was to Eve: "You shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4).
 - Spiritualism teaches that the dead can communicate with the living. Could the dark tunnel, the being of light, the relatives and friends beckoning, be a deception of Satan

to link spiritualism and Christianity? Prominent spiritualist E. W. Sprague wrote: “Spiritualism says that the dead know more than the living...’And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die’...In this, as in many other Bible passages, the Devil told the truth and the Lord is in error.” He said God was wrong—and Satan was telling the truth! The Bible says of Satan, “...There is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

- “For they are spirits of devils, working miracles” (Revelation 16:14). Can the devil masquerade as dead loved ones? Yes, he and his demons can impersonate people in every detail. We rest our faith in the Scriptures, knowing the person is resting unconscious in the grave.
- What is the soul? “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). Did God give Adam a soul? No, Adam became a living soul. Dust + breath = living soul.
- Ecclesiastes 12:7: “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God that gave it.” The Bible uses soul and spirit as two different words. “All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils” (Job 27:3). We may gather wood, nails, and a hammer, and build a box. What happens when we take the box apart? It ceases to exist. When we die, our bodies return to dust and our breath (God’s life-giving power) returns to Him. “For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5). “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17).
- “But wait,” you say. “I thought my mother was looking down on me.” Suppose your mother could see as your marriage fell apart, your spouse became an alcoholic, or her seven-year-old grandchild ran into the street and was hit by a car. God’s way is so much better. When a person dies, she rests peacefully in the hands of Jesus. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). If the soul is immortal, how can it die? “Shall mortal man be more just than his maker” (Job 4:17)?
- “For in death there is no remembrance of you; in the grave, who will give you thanks” (Psalm 6:5)? While the Bible uses the word “soul” 1,600 times (we’re using the King James Version for this example), not once does it refer to the “immortal soul.” But listen to Jesus’ words in this passage: “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep” (John 11:11-13).
- Read about the repentant thief crucified with Jesus. “Then he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42). Why did Jesus promise paradise on Friday when He himself didn’t go there until Sunday? Remember, He showed Himself to Mary on Sunday—still on earth. But that all-important comma can be moved so that the text makes perfect sense: “Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.”

The “take-home” message for you . . .

- The tombstones of those who don’t believe in God are inscribed with loving messages of a grief that has no hope. But Christians grieve with hope! “Goodbye until we meet again,” they say. “Goodbye until morning.”

Just between you . . . and God:

- You don’t need to fear death anymore. One day, Christ the Lifegiver will call forth the saints, joyfully reunite husbands and wives, and place babies back in their mothers’ arms. Death is only a peaceful sleep—and then we will see Jesus.