

DISCOVER PROPHECY



The Heart of Spiritualism

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Spiritualism On The Increase

Spiritualism seems to be increasing the world over. Movies, music and television programs advocate it. Religions flaunt it. Cults are appealing because of it. Once upon a time spiritualism (or the communication with the dead) was shunned and hidden. Now it comes open with rituals and practices to summon demons and spirits. Black clothes, candles and long chantings of mystical grandeur bring these spirits from beyond to the attention of mere mortals.

What lies at the heart of spiritualism? What is the core value in the practice of communicating with those who are dead, whether loved ones just passed on through a psychic or old warriors from ancient civilizations? Can we communicate with the dead? Where are the dead? Once someone dies, do they enter a state or place that allows us to communicate with them? Are they in heaven or hell? Where are the dead? At the heart of spiritualism is the belief that the dead are in a place by which we can communicate. Understanding the Bible teaching on the state of the dead can help us and many others from being deceived by spiritualism in the last days. Job asked the question of God, "But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he?" Job 14: 10.

What Is Mankind?

To better understand what happens to us and others when we die, it would be first valuable to consider the Bible's teaching on the make up of mankind. What are we? Where did we come from? "The dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" Ecclesiastes 12:7. According to the Bible we are made out of two important elements, the body (or dust) and the spirit of God. The two elements together make up mankind. Take one away, and the result is death! Using the example of faith, note what happens when you remove one element. "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" James 2:26. Destroy the body or remove the spirit from it and death is the result. Death occurs when the two elements are no longer operating together.

What is the spirit that is within us? Is it the Spirit of God, or our spirit? "For as long as life is in me, the

breath of God is in my nostrils..." Job 27:3. The Greek and Hebrew words for Spirit is *pneuma* (πνευμα) which means air or breath. Notice how this word looks so much like pneumonia, a health condition effecting the lungs or our breathing.

The spirit is the breath of life that God puts within the body. If this breath (or breath of life) were taken from the body, death would occur. Destroy the body and the breath would depart from us. The result would be death!

A Soul - At Creation

Notice the creation account of mankind. Here we see God making Adam and using the two elements of the body (dust) and His breath (spirit). The result of the two elements together was a soul.

"Then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" Genesis 2:7. Mankind, according to the Bible, does not contain a soul, but IS a soul. Take the dust or body and combine it with the breath of God or spirit and you have a living soul. In simple math you would see it like this:

Dust + Spirit = A Living Soul

Earthly Elements + Breath = Living Person

Just the same, take either element from the other and the result will be death. Subtract the dust from the spirit and you have death; take the spirit from the body and you have a dead soul.

Mankind is only human and mortal- experiencing death. When one dies, he returns to the ground where he originally came from. "Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" Psalm 146:3,4.

Death is much like a light bulb. Alone the light bulb is only a physical unit. It has no use or function by itself. However, put within the bulb the power of electricity and you will have life or light! Remove the power and the bulb is once again dead and useless. With our bodies alone we are useless, there is no life or being.

Our thoughts come to an end, there is nothing. But with the power of God, there is life and function. Remove it and you have death.

A Sleep

Often in the Bible, it compares the reality of death like a sleep. Once you die, you rest in a sleep-like state. “Consider and answer me, O Lord, my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death” Psalm 13:3. Death is a sleep.

When we die, we do not pass to another realm, according to the Bible, but rather rest in the grave until we are called to life again and awake at the second coming of Jesus Christ. “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” Daniel 12:2.

We do not go to heaven immediately at death. Nor are people immediately expelled to the pits of hell and condemnation. Instead, they rest in the grave, like a sleep!

Jesus used the terminology of sleep to describe death when He raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus had come down incredibly sick and in just a short time, he died. Jesus wanted to go and resurrect him from the tomb. Notice how Jesus describes death as a sleep in His conversation with the disciples. “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep.’ The disciples therefore said to Him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.’ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. Then Jesus therefore said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead’” John 11:11-14.

As Jesus came near the area where Lazarus’ body lay dead, his sister Martha came running to Jesus. Upon seeing Jesus, realizing that He might have saved him said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died” John 11:21.

Jesus answered and said to Martha, “Your brother shall rise again” verse 23.

Martha, knowing the truth of death, thought Jesus was speaking instead of the final resurrection that would come later. “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” verse 24. Jesus taught that death was a sleep and the Bible tells us that people will awake from the death sleep at the resurrection day, when Jesus comes again.

Of course, unless you’re Lazarus. Jesus then calls for the stone to be rolled away and though he had been dead for about four days, Jesus calls him to life again!

There are so many Bible verses that use the word sleep to describe death. Note the appendix at the end of this document for just a few of them. Allow the enormous number of texts to shape your view of the biblical death. Death is a sleep.

The Dead Know Nothing

One day a boy goes walking through a cemetery and begins looking at the many inscriptions upon the tomb stones. As he goes from one to another, noting the dates, names and sayings, he comes across one that catches his attention. It reads: “Stop my friend as you go by. As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, you soon shall be. So, prepare yourself to follow me.

The boy stops and thinks for a few minutes about what he has read and then pulling a crayon from his pocket, replies to the saying in his own words. “To follow you I am not content. Until I know just where you went!”

Where do people go when they die? To heaven? To Hell? Some other place in between? Are they alive and conscious now?

We have already seen that death is a sleep and that once you remove either the breath of God or destroy the body, the person dies and returns to the grave. But does the Bible teach that people are in some kind of spirit form? Can’t people, when they die, be in heaven? According to the Bible, dear friend, they are asleep in the grave and unable to think or praise God. “The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down in silence” Psalm 115:17.

“For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten” Ecclesiastes 9: 5. When someone dies, they rest in the grave. They know not what is going on upon the earth or in heaven. They cannot think or communicate. They are asleep. Dead!

“If a man dies, will he live again?...His son achieves honor, but he does not know it; or they become insignificant but he does not perceive it” Job 14: 14,21.

If people went directly to heaven or hell upon death, what need would there be of a resurrection, judgment or second coming? If people were happy in heaven or in torment in hell at this moment, either enjoying eternity or being tortured with fire, why would they need to be resurrected from the grave? There would be no need of a resurrection. If people immediately receive their reward at death, either eternity in heaven or eternity in

hell, why would God have a judgment? If death decides, there would be no need of a judgment. And a second coming: Jesus said in John 14 that He was going to prepare a place for the righteous. Why would He need to come again and take us there if only death would transport us there?

When we study the Bible completely, it is consistent and fits. Jesus will come again and when He does, those who are asleep in the grave will awake; some to eternal life, others to eternal death!

What About The Thief?

Is there anyone in heaven now? Aren't there people who were alive on this earth who died and went to heaven? Yes! The Bible records just a few people who went there. Moses' body was taken after his death. He is in heaven at present. There was also Elijah. He went to heaven in a chariot of fire, not seeing death. Enoch also went directly to heaven. Aside from these, there aren't many others who died and went to heaven. Every one else is going to have to wait until the resurrection day.

Some people feel that the thief on the cross went to heaven at his death. But let's look at this together and discover for ourselves whether that was what happened.

As Jesus hung upon the cross that Friday afternoon, there was on each side of him, a thief. One of them turned to Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" Luke 23:42. The thief, experiencing true repentance upon the cross, turned to Jesus before his death. Jesus turned to the man and said, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise" Luke 23:43.

"Ah ha!" You might say. "There it is. There you have it. Jesus said to the thief that they would be together in paradise that very day! They would both die on the cross that day and would be together in heaven."

Now it may look that way at first glance, but we want to take a closer look. What if, say, we moved the comma in this verse to before the word today, instead of after it? It would read like this: "Truly I say to you today, you shall be with me in paradise." Now that changes things doesn't it? If the comma were in a different place, it could mean the difference between him being in heaven that day and him being there at a later time but knowing that day, while he too hung upon a cross.

It's usually a good idea not to mess around with the punctuation of the Bible. I normally don't move commas around. But you must understand that when

the Bible was written in the original Greek, it had no commas or punctuation. There was no comma in this verse! The translators put the comma in where they felt it should go; based on their interpretation of the text.

As always, we wouldn't want to develop an entire theology of death and the after life on one verse. Let's see if there is another verse that would help us to understand where this comma should be placed. If we could instead see that Jesus did not go to heaven or paradise that day, then it would have to mean otherwise!

Notice what Jesus said on Sunday, two days after he told the thief about going to heaven, about his being in heaven. Had Jesus been to Heaven yet? Mary was excited and hanging on Jesus and He said, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'" John 20:17. Had Jesus been to heaven by Sunday? No! So He could not have meant to the thief that they would be together on Friday in heaven. It can't be true. It must mean that Jesus was assuring him that day, Friday, that he would be some day (at the resurrection) in heaven.

Mortal or Immortal

If we pass from this world to the next without a death, we would be immortal. But the Bible teaches that we, as humans, are mortal and will die! Speaking of King David and his place of sleep the Bible says, "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" Acts 2:29.

God only is immortal! "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light" 1 Timothy 6:15,16. To assume that we will not die is to say that we are immortal. On the contrary, God only is immortal and when we die, we lay in the grave in a state of sleep until we awake from the sleep.

The Resurrection

The good news of the gospel is that when we die, we only sleep and that we will be resurrected from the dead. We will have eternal life! The question is when? When will we have eternal life? When will we awake from the dead and enter into the presence of Jesus and God? The Bible answers this and this is where it gets exciting!

"Your dead will live; there corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew

is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits” Isaiah 26:19. Come resurrection morning, Jesus will call us from the grave and we will receive new bodies and reign with Him throughout eternity. Until then, the dead will be in the grave.

The resurrection morning occurs at the second coming of Jesus Christ. “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 imperishable, and we shall be changed.... But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘death is swallowed up in victory’” I Corinthians 15:51-54.

“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 shall rise first” 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15:55. At that time friends, death will no longer have dominion over us. We will put on new bodies, never to receive pain or disease again. Our bodies presently are perishable, but we will instead put on imperishable bodies. Though presently we are mortal, we will, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, become immortal, never able to die again! At that time, sin and sickness will be gone; taken away. There will be no longer any death. We shall be rejoined with our friends and family and throughout eternity never to be separated again!

“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no longer any more death, there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” Revelation 21:4.

Friend, death is nothing to be afraid of. To those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ into our hearts, death is but a sleep. We can know that loved ones and friends are resting peacefully in the grave. They don’t have to see all the hardship and turmoil we are going through. A mother isn’t pained to see a daughter making bad choices.

Aside from those alive at His coming, we shall all sleep. When Jesus does come in the clouds with His angels, He will blow the trumpet and yell out a shout so loud that it will wake the dead! And we will awake from the grave (death appearing only as a moment for us) to reign with Jesus throughout all eternity, never to see death or pain again! Amen!

Appendix: Sleep

Note the many verse that refer to death as a sleep:

"As soon as my Lord the king sleeps with his fathers" 1 Kings 1:21. "Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David" 1 Kings 2:10. "David slept with his fathers" 1 Kings 11:21. "And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David" 1 Kings 11:43. "Jeroboam slept with his fathers" 1 Kings 14:20. "And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David" 1 Kings 14:31. "Abijah slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city of David" 1 Kings 15:8. "And Asa slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father" 1 Kings 15:24. "And Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah" 1 Kings 16:6. "Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria" 1 Kings 16:28. "So Ahab slept with his fathers" 1 Kings 22:40. "And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David" 1 Kings 22:50. "Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David" 2 Kings 8:24. "Jehu slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria" 2 Kings 10:35. "Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria" 2 Kings 13:9. "Joah slept with his fathers" 2 Kings 13:13. "Jehoash slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel" 2 Kings 14:16. "Elath slept" 2 Kings 14:22. "Jeroboam slept with his fathers" 2 Kings 14:29. "Azariah slept with his fathers, and they buried him" 2 Kings 15:7. "Menahem slept with his father" 2 Kings 15:22. "Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him" 2 Kings 15:38. "Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried" 2 Kings 16:20. "Hezekiah slept with his fathers" 2 Kings 20:21. "Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried" 2 Kings 21:18. "Jehoiakim slept with his fathers" 2 Kings 24:6. "Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried" 2 Chronicles 9:31. "Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried" 2 Chronicles 12:16. "Abijah slept with his fathers and they buried him" 2 Chronicles 14:1. "Asa slept with his fathers, having died" 2 Chronicles 16:13. "Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried" 2 Chronicles 21:1. "Uzziah slept with his fathers and they buried him" 2 Chronicles 26:23. "Jotham slept with his fathers and they buried him" 2 Chronicles 27:9. "Ahaz slept with his fathers and they buried him" 2 Chronicles 28:27. "Hezekiah slept with his fathers and they buried him" 2 Chronicles 32:33. "Manasseh slept with his fathers and they buried him" 2 Chronicles 33:2.

