

DEATH

Upon the death of any living creature, respiration ceases, and with the body not inhaling to supply oxygen to the brain, life ends. Most religions of the world, including the majority of churches within Christendom, teach that people have a phantom or ghost-like soul or spirit that departs from the body upon one's death, and travels to heaven, purgatory, or into the body of another living creature (as in reincarnation). What does the Bible teach about death?

Some say the scriptures prove we have a ghost within us that goes on living in a non-material state as stated in Ecclesiastes 12:7: ***“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”*** It is believed by most that ‘spirit’ in the preceding verse refers to the ghost-like soul within the body that is released upon death and goes into heaven. But that is an assumption made by most people who follow their faith's established beliefs. If one checks the Hebrew word from which ‘spirit’ was derived in the forementioned verse, one learns it is “ruwach”, which, according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, reference # 7307, means ‘wind’ or ‘breath’ and comes from # 7306 which means ‘to blow, to breathe’. The word ‘spirit’ is not capitalized in the verse, therefore, is in reference to man's spirit or consciousness. Humans are only conscious as long as there is breath within the body.

Let us now turn to 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 soul.”*** Breath is the function of our body inhaling through the nostrils that brings oxygen into the lungs, which is picked up by the blood circulation and carried throughout all parts of the body and is especially needed for brain function. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the following is the definition of the Hebrew words translated as ‘breath’ and ‘breathed’: ‘5359 breath – neshamah – puff, ie. wind – and # 5301 breathed – to puff, inflate, blow, expire.’ Today we know that as long as our respiratory system remains functioning, we are a living soul. Without our ability to breathe, our bodies have no life, as we do not receive the essential gases conveyed to us by the pressure of the wind or air upon our diaphragm. Based on the original Hebrew words, we believe that what God had provided to us to sustain us is then returned to him upon our death, that is, the air or breath of life.

Throughout our lives, most of us have heard people comment at funerals or elsewhere that they believed loved ones who had died were looking down on them from a heavenly abode. But contrary to this thinking, the Bible tells us that the dead cannot see, hear nor think. If that is the case, then why do so many people believe that while the body dies, there is a soul or spirit that continues to live on for ever that has awareness of what is going on in our world? Let us first read Genesis 3:4: ***“And the serpent [Satan] said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”*** This was said unto Eve after informing the snake that she and Adam were instructed by God not to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This was the first lie that Satan told mankind and has been with us ever since. Due to this fabrication of Satan, some of us have never stopped believing that everyone's soul continues to live on after our physical bodies die. The New Testament refers to the lie told by Satan from the beginning in the following passages: ***“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of you father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because 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; ***“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*** II Corinthians 11:3. For clarity on what God had said to the first people he created, let us read the first book: ***“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*** Genesis 2:16, 17; ***“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”*** Genesis 3:3. Most of us know that once Adam and Eve took of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they did not fall down dead. So was God mistaken in His telling of Adam that the day he took of the tree of knowledge, that they would die? Absolutely not. What some people are unaware of is that what has been

translated in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible as “thou shalt surely die” in Genesis 2:17 should have been translated as “dying thou shalt die”. If you have a KJV with a reference column, check it out yourself. What this means is that God was not saying that Adam and Eve would immediately die by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge but that the aging process would then begin for all of mankind. ‘Aging’ is what brings all of us to our ultimate death. Up until the time that they disobeyed God, mankind was in that state of perfection where death did not exist for us, but once we disobeyed God’s instruction, we no longer were immortal but had an ending, that is, we all would eventually die. Therefore, we see that the Devil was in fact very subtle in that we did not die immediately after eating of that forbidden fruit but the aging process began where all of us would eventually see death.

Turning to the gospels, what does Jesus say about death? **“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 [ie. the grave].”** Matthew 10:28. As a Christian, when we follow Jesus and unite our spirit with the Spirit of God, we will be saved, both body and soul in that day of Christ’s return. When we rid our minds of worldly lusts, God will save us through that Spirit that gives life to all things. It is by making that choice to do good rather than evil that will save both our body and soul in Judgment Day. **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh [ie. living worldly rather than spiritually] cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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 ... For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”** Romans 8:7 to 11, 13. When we make conscious decisions to perform good and submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, God shall raise us upon Christ’s return, so that in our flesh, we shall see him. **“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”** Job 19:25, 26.

When we die, all of us go into a ‘sleep’ wherein there is no consciousness or awareness of anything. Upon Jesus’ return, all shall rise from their graves, some to be given the gift of eternal life while those who performed evil to punishment of total destruction. The Bible describes two resurrections, the first being for those who have died in Christ and the second for those who will be judged to eternal destruction. **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power ...”** Revelations 20:6a; **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”** Revelations 2:11; **“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [ie. the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”** Revelations 20:12 to 15; **“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”** Revelations 21:8; **“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall leave them neither root or branch.”** Malachi 4:1. Also read Matthew 13:24 to 30, 36 to 43. The preceding passages clearly tell us that there is in fact an end to those who have lived unrighteous lives and that they will be totally obliterated from existence. They will not continue burning in an eternal hellfire but after being punished, it will be as if they had never existed.

Contrary to what the masses believe, the Bible does not teach that when we die, our spirit lives on with the power to see, hear, and think while the world goes on. In fact, the Bible tells us that the dead do not hear nor know anything. ***“For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”*** Psalm 6:5; ***“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; ***“His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.”*** Job 14:21; ***“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day, his thoughts perish.”*** Psalm 146:4; ***“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”*** Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6. When we die, we all go into that sleep where there is no consciousness of anything until Jesus’ return.

‘Sleep’ is a good metaphor for what happens to those who die. During deep sleep there is no consciousness; when we have dreams, that happens just prior to us waking up out of our sleep but dreaming does not occur during deep sleep. For those who die, we can consider them in a state of deep sleep since they will once again be risen and become conscious again, some to the gift of eternal life and others to eternal destruction. ***“So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.”*** Job 14:12; ***“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.”*** I Thessalonians 4:13 to 15.

The human body is made up of various elements of the earth including the gases contained in the air. Upon our death, our material body returns to the earth and decomposes until it once again becomes ‘dust’ from which our bodies were created. Our breath, which gives us life and consciousness, leaves our body and returns to the atmosphere which God created. ***“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.”*** Isaiah 38:18; ***“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”*** Genesis 3:19; ***“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”*** Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20. Until the Day of Judgment, all people face the same fate and that is the sleep of death.

If we believe in the Christ and that he was resurrected by God, as Christians we are not bothered by the fact that when we die, there is no more consciousness and our physical body will decompose into nothing. This is because we know of the power of God which can do anything, including reforming our bodies and reviving us so that we will know who we are when Jesus returns to this earth. So as we live our lives, we should be careful about the choices we make for if we live after the sins of the flesh, we face eternal destruction and will not live ever again: ***“The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”*** Psalm 34:16. But if we try to live righteously, eternal life is our reward. ***“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city [ie. New Jerusalem].”*** Revelations 22:14.