

## WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?

- Unless otherwise noted all quotations from Scripture are from the New King James Version
- I often type words in capitals for EMPHASIS. You will notice it occurring in the expression of my own thoughts AND in quotations.
- All my comments and opinions are given from my viewpoint as a Christian who believes that the text of the Holy Bible, as originally given, is the Word of God. My opinions are based on my understanding of God's opinion as expressed in the Bible and I offer them with good intention without any will to cause offense to anyone holding a different opinion. They are offered in the hope of shedding light and providing help to anyone open to receive it.
- The text of the booklet would be too lengthy if I typed out in full every Scripture referred to, but you will miss much of the message if you do not turn to, and read, each of the Scriptures concerned.

# WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?

## INTRODUCTION

The answer one might give to this question would depend upon the enquirer and the purpose of their enquiry. If a young child was asking the question you might simply tell the child that we go to be with God and our body is buried in a cemetery.

If an older person is asking the question you might give a very simple answer then ask them what further information they want on the causes of death, the alternatives for dealing with the deceased persons remains and the different beliefs about life after death for the person's soul or spirit.

In more fully answering the question my intention is to draw out from the Scriptures what I believe they clearly teach about death, resurrection and our prospects for eternity for everyone.

Answers to questions such as this usually generate more questions from those who seek clarification on specific issues. There is a limit to my ability to predict what those questions might be, but I will endeavour to make the answer as complete as possible.

Some subjects can be dealt with in isolation from others but when we try to shed light on what happens when we die it is impossible to do so without touching on what Scripture reveals about several other important areas of truth. Passing from life in time as we know it brings up the subject of eternity. Discussing the differences between time and eternity leads to consideration of the plans and purposes of God. This in turn makes it necessary to attempt to discover how God has created human beings to be part of His plans. Inevitably we become involved in thinking about a wide range of issues before we can feel satisfied that we have adequately answered the question.

Scripture sheds light on all these subjects. Confirmation that we have come up with the right answer comes when we test our conclusions against statements made in Scripture that would not otherwise make sense.

We all have an interest in the answer to this question. The Scriptures say, "the living know that they shall die;" (Ecclesiastes 9.5) but they also tell us that "it is appointed for men to die once, BUT AFTER THIS THE JUDGEMENT" (Hebrews 9.27). So there is something AFTER death for us to face, namely "THE JUDGEMENT". If death is the end of everything for us we could die without any concerns, but, since that is not the case, each one of us should be asking, "What is the judgement?" Nor does it end there, for we should also ask a series of other questions, like:

- Why will we be judged?

- Who will judge us?
- What will follow the judgement?.....and, ultimately
- How can I prepare for the judgement?

It is well worth delving much more deeply into the subject to discover what happens after death, for, as it turns out, it has far-reaching implications for how we live our lives here and now!

To find the answer we will start by looking at some of the facts recorded in Scripture regarding the life and death of one of the most famous men who ever lived.

### THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MOSES

Moses rates mention in both the Old and the New Testaments. I think it would be fair to say that he is one of the most significant men who has ever lived. During his lifetime God used him in the formation of the nation of Israel and the humiliation of the ruling nation of his day (Egypt). After his life on earth he was a legend in the nation God selected for revelation of His purposes in salvation. His writings are still read almost world-wide every day and he is spoken of, with reverence, every day in the nation to which he belonged. It is not surprising that we have things to learn from what Scripture records of his life and death.

Moses lived 120 years and his life can be divided into three phases:

- I) He spent 40 years as a prince LEARNING TO BE SOMETHING (Exodus.2.1-15, and Acts 7.20-29)
- II) He spent 40 years as a shepherd LEARNING TO BE NOTHING (Exodus 2.16-3.6 and Acts 7.30-32)
- III) He spent 40 years as a prophet LEARNING THAT GOD IS EVERYTHING (Exodus 3.7-22 and Acts 7.33-37)

At the age of 120 it is recorded of him that “His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigour diminished”. These words are found in verse 7 of Deuteronomy 34, the chapter that records his death and burial. It was a burial like no other, for GOD BURIED HIM and the location of his grave is not known.

His death was remarkable, but what is more remarkable is that this is not the last we hear of him. Almost 1,500 years pass by and the Messiah has come. Jesus is on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James and John and who appears to talk with Jesus but MOSES (Matthew 17.1-3). Elijah is there too! What an amazing group of people this is on the mount! We have three disciples PETER, JAMES and JOHN (normal men living out their lives as we all do) JESUS (the, ETERNAL Son of God incarnate) MOSES (who had died some 1,500 years earlier) and ELIJAH (who had not died but had been taken directly to heaven some 700 years earlier). How does this fit in with our understanding of life and death? It tells

me that there are some things about life and death that are not normally talked about. These things are recorded in the Word of God so they are factual and the recording of them is accurate.

How do we account for these truths? As it turns out the answer is not very difficult. As Jesus talked to the Sadducees he referred to what God said to Moses when He called him to go back to Egypt. To get the full context of it read Matthew 22.23-33. God said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". Jesus then said to them, "God is not the God of the DEAD, but of the LIVING". The implication was obvious. Even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been dead for hundreds of years there was (and is) some sense in which they were (and are) still alive, and if it is true for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is true for Moses AND EQUALLY TRUE FOR YOU AND ME! No wonder the Sadducees were "astonished at His teaching". They did not believe in any sort of life after death, not even a resurrection at the end of time.

It is significant that the conversation about life and death was taking place with the Sadducees. Their belief system was very defective in this area. They did not believe in the existence of the spirit (Acts 23.8) and we will discover that the truth concerning soul and spirit is critical to understanding what happens to us when we die.

This revelation from Jesus to the Sadducees gives us a start in seeking to find an answer to our question.

As a next step let us look at what the Scripture gives as:

#### A DEFINITION OF DEATH

As James discusses the relationship between faith and works he writes, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2.26). From this we can conclude that when the spirit departs from the body death occurs. This agrees with what is recorded in Ecclesiastes 12.7, "Then dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God Who gave it." We see this in what is recorded in John 19.30 concerning the death of Jesus on the cross, "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" and bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." The record of His death in the gospel of Luke ties together what happens unseen (the departure of the Spirit) and what we, as humans, can observe (the cessation of breathing) for it says, "when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke.23.46).

We hear of people being 'brain dead' (the brain has ceased to function but other organs are still functioning). For a person to be fully dead all essential organs have ceased functioning and the spirit has departed.

When a person dies their body starts to decay. This is what is being referred to in Ecclesiastes when it says, "dust will return to the earth as it was". Adam's body was made from dust (Genesis 2.7) and when a human body dies it eventually returns to dust. Many people find it difficult to accept the plain statements of Scripture and some have set out to attempt to prove that Scripture is wrong on one issue or another. Inevitably the Scriptures are proven to be absolutely correct. Human bodies have been analysed to ascertain the chemical substances they contain and it has been established that they are composed of the same ten elements as "the dust of the ground".

To more fully understand the definition of death given to us in the Word of God we need to know what constitutes a human being. This takes us back to the very first chapter of Genesis where the creation of man is described. Verse 26 tells us that “God said, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”” and the following verse says, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

There are many ways in which we reflect God’s likeness. We have intellect, emotion and will. We can be imaginative and creative. We can make choices. We are, of-course, very limited in our abilities but God is totally unlimited. We know only as much about God as He has seen fit to reveal to us, but one significant thing we know is that He is TRI-UNE. He manifests Himself as the FATHER, the SON and the SPIRIT (1 John 5.7). Our likeness to God in this respect is that we are TRI-PARTITE having a BODY, a SOUL and a SPIRIT (1 Thessalonians 5.23). While all three of our constituent parts are functioning together we are alive, but when the body dies the soul and spirit depart.

The physical body is the home and vehicle for our soul and spirit for our current life on earth, but it is a temporary abode. At the resurrection it will be replaced by a body that will be eternal (1 Corinthians 15 35-49). Later in this study we will look at Scriptures that give us teaching on what happens:

- a) when the soul and spirit leave the temporal body,
- b) when the soul and spirit are re-united with the eternal body.

A next reasonable step would be to look at some:

#### DIRECT TEACHING GIVEN BY JESUS

Going back to the revelation Jesus gave to the Sadducees in Matthew 22.23-33 let us note the reason the Lord gave them for their failure to know the truth. He said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22.29). We can assume from what Jesus said to them that to fully grasp the answer we seek we will need to acquaint ourselves with the Scriptures that deal with the subject AND have complete faith in God’s power to do what those Scriptures say. At the time Jesus said that, the only Scriptures available to the Sadducees were what we refer to as The Old Testament. According to Jesus there is enough in the Old Testament to come to a correct conclusion on the subject, but, in this study we will take advantage of the fact that we also have The New Testament and we will begin by looking at some of the things Jesus said:

#### **(i) To the disciple who wanted to defer following Him (Matthew 8.21-22)**

Jesus said, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (v.22). The disciple responded to Jesus’s invitation to follow Him by expressing his desire to defer following Jesus until his father had died and he had carried out the duty of burying him.

Jesus indicated, in what He said, that there is more than one way to be “dead”. He was telling the disciple that he should leave the ‘spiritually dead’ to bury the ‘physically dead’. This opens our understanding of what is meant by other Scriptures, for example:

- Genesis 2.15-17 - “Then the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.”” Adam and Eve did eat of that tree and a change took place in them which led to them being cursed by God (Genesis 3.1-19) but they did not die physically that day. Young’s Literal Translation renders “you shall surely die” as “dying thou dost die”. Adam and Eve had died spiritually toward God THAT DAY and, as a result of it, they were condemned to die physically. Adam lived, physically, until he was 939 years old (Genesis 5.5).
- Romans 5.12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”. Adam had sinned and died spiritually toward God. As descendants of Adam we are born spiritually dead, with a sinful nature. Genesis 5.3 tells us that, “Adam lived one hundred and thirty years and begot a son IN HIS OWN LIKENESS, AFTER HIS IMAGE, and named him Seth.” Seth and every person after him inherited Adam’s fallen, sinful nature. As a consequence we sin and, in due course we die physically. This is why Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2.1) and that is why, as sinners, we need to be “born again” to be part of God’s kingdom (John 3.3). Paul writes to the church in Corinth, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15.22).

**(ii) To Martha when her brother Lazarus had died (John 11.1-45)**

Several things are worth noting as we look at this passage of Scripture:

- Verse 4 makes it clear that Jesus, as God the Son, knew exactly what would happen through the death and restoration of Lazarus.
- In verse 11 Jesus referred to Lazarus as “sleeping” when he was actually dead (vs. 13-15). This by no means supports the mistaken teaching of ‘soul sleep’ nor the equally mistaken belief that we go into a state of ‘nothingness’ when we die. Death is referred to as “sleep” euphemistically in quite a few parts of Scripture but the facts regarding death and afterlife are clearly taught.
- In verses 25-26 Jesus, talking to Martha, makes an amazing statement. He says, “I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me SHALL NEVER DIE”. So amazing is this statement that Jesus asks Martha, “Do you believe this?”. It is, however, too much for Martha to take in! Her answer shows that these wonderful truths had not penetrated (v.27) and she cannot move beyond her belief in a general resurrection “at the last day” (v.24).
- Jesus proceeded to use His power and authority as “the resurrection and the life” by restoring Lazarus to life (verses 38-45). Everything turned out just as Jesus had predicted (vs. 4 + 15).
- Not only had Jesus shown His power and authority over death but He revealed that those who believe in Him “SHALL NEVER DIE”. We will die physically (unless we survive until the Lord returns) but we will never die spiritually. Those who were present when Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH” (John 10.27-28) should already have known this! We are assured that this is not a mere promise of life at some time in the future. We are told that we possess that eternal life here and now! (1 John 5.13 says, “These things I have written to you who

believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may KNOW that you HAVE eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” We will see the full implications of this as we proceed with this study.

**(iii) To the Pharisees (Luke 16.19-31)**

- Here Jesus makes the clearest possible of statements regarding what happens to both the justified and the unjustified when they die. It is important to note that this relates to what was happening before Jesus died for our sins and rose again. We will have to look to other Scriptures to discover the changes brought about by our Saviour’s death and resurrection.
- The Pharisees were self-seeking lovers of money (verses 14-15). Jesus knew exactly the message they needed to hear and it must have spoken directly to their hearts. There is much in this message that people still do not wish to hear.
- Many commentators take this passage to be a parable but, in my opinion, there is every reason to believe that the Lord is recounting what actually happened to the two men concerned. It is not called a parable and the fact that the name of one of the men is mentioned suggests that it is a true story. However, even if it was a parable the Lord based his parables on real life happenings. He would never have used parables to distort truth. He IS the TRUTH (John 14.6) and He came to tell the truth (John 8.45-46).
- The truths flowing from this story are numerous, but, more important than that they are startling and alarming to anyone who is hearing them for the first time.
- DEATH IS NOT THE END OF LIFE (vs. 22-23). THIS MAY SOUND SELF-CONTRADICTIONARY BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT DEATH AS WE KNOW IT IS MERELY THE DEATH OF THE PHYSICAL BODY, BUT CONSCIOUSNESS CONTINUES AND THE PERSON LIVES ON AS SOUL AND SPIRIT
- THE TRANSITION FROM THIS LIFE TO THE NEXT IS IMMEDIATE (vs. 22-24)
- YOU GO TO ONE OF ONLY TWO POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS (vs. 23-25)
- THE CONTRAST IN CONDITIONS IN THE DESTINATIONS IS STARK (v.25) (comforted or tormented)
- ONCE YOUR DESTINATION IS DETERMINED IT CANNOT BE CHANGED (v.26)
- HAVING EXPERIENCED THE DESTINATION OF TORMENT YOU WOULD NOT WISH IT ON ANYONE ELSE (vs. 27-28)
- YOUR DESTINATION AFTER THIS LIFE DEPENDS ON YOUR RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD DURING YOUR LIFETIME ON EARTH (v.29)
- IF WE DO NOT RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE WORD OF GOD UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES OUR RESPONSE WOULD NOT BE CHANGED BY MIRACLES (vs. 30-31)

These revelations are startling, and if, as I contend, this is a true story, it is interesting to observe that Lazarus, a true follower of God, had very difficult circumstances in life here on earth (poor health and poverty) while the rich man, who chose not to follow God, had a life of luxury and self-indulgence. It certainly runs contrary to the expectations of those who preach a false ‘prosperity’ gospel.

This is not the only direct teaching given by Jesus on what happens when we die, but before giving my answer to the question in the title of the study let me take you to some very informative statements in various parts of The Word of God. I will call this next step:

CLEAR TEACHING ON THE SUBJECT IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Word of God records what happened to several people after they died. At the start of this study I referred to what happened to Moses. His death and burial in the land of Moab is recorded in Deuteronomy 34.5-6 and his reappearance on the mount of transfiguration, to talk with Jesus, is recorded in Matthew 17.1-2. He was accompanied by Elijah. Elijah did not die. At the end of his time of ministry here on earth he was transported to heaven (2 Kings 2.1-14) so it is safe to assume that Elijah and Moses had come from heaven to speak to Jesus on the mount.

Genesis 5.18-24 gives a very brief account of the birth and life on earth of Enoch. He did not die, but at the age of 365 (young for those days) Enoch was taken straight to heaven. Hebrews 11. 5 fills in some details not given in the Genesis account. It says, "By faith Enoch was TRANSLATED – not to see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had been testified to – that he had pleased God well". When we 'translate' language we change it from a form where it is accepted in one place to a form where it accepted in another place. This is exactly what happened to Enoch. He was changed to be acceptable, and at home, in heaven. Not having died he would, to our knowledge, be the oldest man living in heaven. Elijah is quite a few years younger!

Samuel's death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25.1, but in 1 Samuel 28.7-20, with the help of a medium, king Saul receives a prophetic message from Samuel. Mediums and their practices are an abomination (Deuteronomy 18.10-12) but the accuracy of Samuel's prophecy and the factual way the mediums and their practices are recorded means that we cannot dismiss the record as doubtful. These verses in 1 Samuel are testimony to the life and awareness of events of Samuel after his body was dead and buried.

When the criminals on either side of Jesus spoke to Him on the cross Jesus made a promise to the one who acknowledged Him as Lord. He said to Him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke. 23.39-43).

The most detailed, most clear and most important record of what happened to a person when He died is, of-course, the record of what happened to Jesus Christ. It had already been prophesied that Jesus would die for our sins (Isaiah 53.4-12) and Psalm 16.10 says of Jesus, "You will not leave My soul in Sheol, nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption". Peter confirmed the application and meaning of Psalm 16.10 on the Day of Pentecost when he preached the words recorded in Acts 2.22-31. At death Jesus dismissed His spirit (John 19.30). His body was placed in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27.57-60). His body and spirit parted company. His body lay in the tomb, incorruptible, until His spirit returned to it three days later and it was in that same body He appeared to His disciples (Luke 24.36-40).

It is worth noting the closeness of SOUL and SPIRIT, for Psalm 16.10 says, "You will not leave my SOUL in Sheol" and 1 Peter 3.18-19 says Jesus went by the SPIRIT and "preached to the SPIRITS in prison". I will say more about this later.

When Jesus was asked by some scribes and Pharisees for a sign from heaven He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12.39-40). While Jesus's body was in the tomb His soul and spirit descended into Sheol for some very important work.



Peter takes up the story in his second epistle when he says, "Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by Whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water." (2 Peter 3.18-20). During the three days and nights that His body was in the tomb Jesus had a ministry of updating to do to in the area of Sheol where the spirits of "disobedient" people of past generations were.

Further information is given in Ephesians 4.7-12 where we read, "to each of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this "He ascended" – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,". These verses cover a lot of ground. They make mention of Jesus, in spirit, descending into Sheol, leading out of Sheol the spirits of the Old Testament saints who were held captive there until He had died for their sins, taking them to heaven above and then equipping the saints on earth for the work of the ministry.

While it is a digression from the subject under consideration it is worth noting that as well as the ministry He had to the spirits of the "disobedient" He had a work to do for the spirits of the Old Testament saints. He therefore spent time in both areas of Sheol mentioned in the story of the rich man and Lazarus we discussed earlier (recorded in Luke 16.19-31). It was during time spent in the area referred to as "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16.22) that Jesus kept His promise to the thief who had been crucified beside Him (Luke 23.43). It was due to the releasing of the spirits of the Old testament saints that we read in Hebrews 12.23 that we have come "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT". Understanding these things helps in avoiding the common mistaken belief that "the Church" only consists of the saints from Pentecost to the Rapture. Saints from all time (Old Testament and New Testament, Pre-Tribulation, Tribulation and Millennial) constitute the church. When Jesus returns, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18, He will be accompanied by the spirits of ALL the saints who have died!

Sufficient has been included in this brief study for me to now state what I believe is:

#### THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION

**When a person dies the soul and spirit leave the body and the body starts its process of decay (Ecclesiastes 12,7). The person is then subjected to a judgement (Hebrews 9,27) and the spirit and soul go immediately to the destination of God's appointment (Luke 16.22-25). The person stays in that destination until they are released as God is fulfilling His end-times prophecies and purposes. For true believers that will be when Jesus Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18) and for everyone else it will be at the final White Throne Judgement (Revelation 20.11-15). The Great White Throne**

**Judgement will be the last act of time and will herald the commencement of eternity with God for the justified (Revelation 21. 1-5) and eternity without God for the lost (Matthew 25.14). The destination of the soul and spirit of each individual will be determined by their relationship, by faith, to Jesus Christ (John 8.21 + 24 and Acts 4.12).**

This conclusion underscores the importance and urgency of proclaiming the gospel of salvation, by grace, through faith, to every person in the world. It should fill believers with concern for the lost, it should move us to fervent prayer and it should lead us to constant evangelism.

## TESTING THE CONCLUSION

There are several ways we could test the conclusion I have reached. The more tests it passes the more assurance we will have that it is correct. Let me suggest a few such tests, as follows:

- Some people believe that humans have no soul or spirit. They believe we just have a physical body and when it dies it decays and that is the end of everything. Others believe that we are BI-PARTITE (that is, we have a physical body and a spiritual side to our make-up that could be called either soul or spirit) and that when we die the soul/spirit goes to sleep, waiting to be wakened at the resurrection. These beliefs would be wrong and the conclusion I have suggested would be confirmed as being correct if we have Scripture to prove that peoples' souls or spirits live on after the people die. When we search the Word of God we discover that we HAVE such Scriptures (for ONE, Matthew 17.1-2 has Moses talking to Jesus 1,500 years after he died and for ANOTHER Revelation 6.9-11 has the souls of martyrs asking the Lord when He is going to judge the earth).
- If the conclusion I have suggested is correct we should expect to have some writer of Scripture, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, saying that when he dies he will go into the Lord's presence. This is exactly what we do find! In Philippians 1.21-26 Paul discusses his life and the prospect of his death and states his desire "to depart and be with Christ". So confident is he of passing immediately into the presence of Jesus when he dies that he states it as the prospect of every believer as he writes to the church in Corinth, "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."(2 Corinthians 5.1). He makes it clear that he is talking about the destruction/death of our body as he deals with the subject in detail in the first nine verses of that fifth chapter.
- If my conclusion is correct we would expect to find some statement in Scripture that says that OUR CURRENT SOUL IS READY FOR ETERNITY AS IT IS whereas OUR CURRENT BODY WILL NEED TO BE ALTERED RADICALLY. This is exactly what we find, for Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, describes in detail the radical changes required to our bodies at the resurrection, as the Lord returns (1 Corinthians 15.35-57). Reading another passage dealing with the same event we find that the souls and spirits of the saints who have died come back, WITH the Lord, FROM HEAVEN, having been there for some time, unaltered (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18)

These are just a few examples of how my conclusion can be tested. I encourage you to test my conclusion any and every way you can. Only when you have seen that it passes the tests can you be confident that I have arrived at the right conclusion.

## FURTHER STUDY

The more truth we know the better equipped we will be to answer questions people ask as we take the gospel to them. I will end this brief study by listing a few avenues of study you may wish to pursue in your own time. Each of these subjects is linked to what happens to us when we die, and the Scripture references will give you a start on your study of them:

- **Soul and Spirit:** Soul and spirit are difficult terms to define. It is common knowledge that “soul” is used to simply mean “person” (Acts 2.41) but, when referring to body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5.23) it most likely refers to the unique personality of an individual encompassing his or her intellect, emotion and will (Judges 16.16 and Luke 1.46). The spirit has inseparable connection with life (Luke 23.46). This does not change in the resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15.14). While the soul and spirit are very closely related they are separate and separable parts of a person (Hebrews 4.12).
- **Sin and the role it plays in time and eternity:** We can trace sin back to what may have been its origin in Satan (Ezekiel 28.13-15) and we are told how he tempted Eve and brought Adam and Eve into a sinful state (Genesis 3.1-19). As descendants of Adam we inherit his sin and the condemnation that resulted from it (Romans 5.18). The only solution to our sin problem was for Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, to pay the debt we owe (2 Corinthians 5.21 and Isaiah 53.4-11). There is no other remedy for our sin (Acts 4.12). Those who accept it, by repenting and accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, are delivered from condemnation and given eternal life (John 3.16). Those who do not will pay the ultimate price (John 3.36). Sin will ultimately be defeated (1 Corinthians 15.55-56) and the eternal dwelling place for those saved by grace will be protected from sin and its effects forever (Revelation 21.2 + 22-27).
- **Heaven and Hell:** Heaven is “above” the earth (which is really the only way of describing anything that is neither “on” the earth or “inside” it), but it is complex in its perseity (2 Corinthians 12.1-4). It is where God dwells (Psalm 11.4), it is full of activity (Revelation 4), it can experience disturbance during “time” (Revelation 12.7) but it will, in the eternity that lies ahead, be perfect, as will the new earth (Revelation 21.1-5). Hell, in all of its phases, is to be avoided at all costs (Mark 9.43-48). It was made for the Devil and his angels but the unjust will join them there (Matthew 25.41).

May the Lord Bless and enlighten you as you grow in grace and a knowledge of truth (2 Peter 3.9-18).

## END NOTE

Lazarus died and was brought back to life (John 11.1-45) but he said nothing about his experience. The same can be said for others (like the widow’s son – Luke 7.11-17, or the daughter of Jairus – Luke 8.41-56, or Dorcas – Acts 9.36-42). Jesus Christ, however, does speak of His experience. He said, “I am He who LIVES and WAS DEAD, and behold I AM ALIVE FOREVERMORE. AMEN! And I have the keys of Hades and of death.” (Revelation 1.18). He is the One to look to for the answer to this question. His words carry the weight of experience AND OF GOD, Who MADE EVERYTHING, KNOWS EVERYTHING and DECIDED ON THE PURPOSE FOR EVERYTHING.