

Where Are The Dead?

Regarding the whereabouts of the dead (*“they that sleep in Christ”*), the following Scriptures should be considered. In Matthew 12:38, when the Pharisees sought a sign from Jesus that he is the Son of God, he promised **only one**.

*“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be **three days and three nights** in the **heart** of the earth” (v. 40).*

The word *“heart”* in the verse above is *“kardia”* in the Greek (*Strong’s #2588*) and it means *“middle.”* If Jesus did not spend *“three days and three nights in the **middle** of the earth,”* that takes away the **one proof** he gave us that he is indeed the Son of God. But of course he did! This cannot be speaking of his stay in the tomb, as it was not in the *“heart”* or *“middle”* of the earth. The tomb was hewn out of a rock on top of the ground. So this being established, the next question is what was Jesus doing for *“three days and three nights in the **middle** of the earth?”* Peter tells us in I Peter 3:18-20:

“[Christ] being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which [in his spirit] he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah...” (English Standard Version).

“[Christ] having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit [his own spirit]; in which also He went and made proclamation to the

spirits in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah..." (I Peter 3:18-20 NASB).

"His body was put to death, but he was brought to life through [in?] his spirit. In it [his spirit] he also went to proclaim his victory to the spirits kept in prison" (God's Word Translation).

What did Jesus proclaim when *"he went and preached unto the spirits in prison"* (I Peter 3:19)? Peter tells us that also:

*"For this cause was the **gospel preached** also to them that are dead..."*
(I Peter 4:6).

The word "gospel" in the verse above is "euaggelizo" in the Greek (Strong's #2097) and it means, "to announce good news." *The Interlinear Bible - Hebrew - Greek - English* (Green), has I Peter 4:6 as:

*"For indeed to **dead ones** was the gospel preached that they might be judged indeed according to men in flesh; but might live according to God in Spirit." Note: Since there was no higher-lower case in the Greek, the last "Spirit" should read "spirit." In fact the KJV has it, "but live according to God in the spirit."*

And Paul believed exactly as Peter did. He says in Ephesians 4:8:

“Wherefore he saith, When he [Jesus] ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

Regarding “captivity captive” the text **notes** say, “**a multitude of captives.**” That agrees with the **text** of the *New International Version*:

*“When he ascended on high, **he led captives in his train** and gave gifts to men” (Eph. 4:8 NIV).*

The *New Living Translation* renders this verse as:

*“When he ascended to the heights [heaven], **he led a crowd of captives** and gave gifts to his people” (Eph. 4:8 NLT).*

The *Good News Bible* says:

*“When he went up to the very heights, **he took many captives with him;** he gave gifts to mankind” (Eph. 4:8 Good News Bible).*

The *English Standard Version* says:

*“When he ascended on high **he led a host of captives,** and he gave gifts to men” (Eph. 4:8 ESV).*

And finally, Nelson’s *New Century Version* says:

*“When he went up to the heights, **he led a parade of captives,** and he*

gave gifts to people” (Eph. 4:8 NCV).

That fact being firmly established, the next question is, where did Jesus encounter or liberate the “*train*” or “*multitude*” of captives that he took with him when he ascended to heaven? Paul answers that question for us in the very next verse.

*“Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also **descended first** into the **lower parts** [Jesus said “middle”] **of the earth**” (Eph. 4:9 KJV).*

The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* says:

*“...He descended to the **lower parts of the earth**” (Eph. 4:9 Holman CSB).*

The *Good News Bible* says:

*“...**down to the lowest depths** of the earth” (Eph. 4:8 Good News Bible).*

The *New American Standard Bible* and the *English Standard Version* say:

*“...He **had also descended into the lower parts** of the earth” (NASB - ESV).*

God’s Word Translation says of Ephesians 4:9:

*“...he **also had gone down** to the **lowest parts** of the earth” (God’s Word Translation).*

Does this “*lowest parts of the earth*” to which Jesus descended to retrieve captives, have a name? We look again to the apostle Peter for the answer. In Acts chapter two, in his great sermon to the multitude at Pentecost, Peter called King David a “*prophet,*” and quoted a prophecy of David from the Psalm, thus:

*“Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also **my flesh shall rest in hope:** Because thou [God] wilt not leave my **soul in hell,** neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:26-27).*

Then Peter says of this prophecy by David:

*“He, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that **his soul was not left in hell,** neither **his flesh did see corruption**” (Acts 2:31).*

Could anything be more clear to those who sincerely desire the truth? Peter is speaking of **two distinct parts** of the man Christ Jesus, “*his soul*” and “*his flesh.*” He assures us that “**his soul was not left in hell,**” and “**his flesh did not see corruption**” in the grave! The word “*hell*” in the verse above is “*hades*” in the Greek, and it is the same word Jesus used in Luke 16:23:

*“And in **hell** he lifted up his eyes, being in torments... .”* Note: This could not possibly have been in a grave!

To those who honestly desire the truth, please notice that there is nothing in Jesus’ story

of the rich man and Lazarus to indicate that this is a parable, or anything else but a true glimpse, given to us by the one person who knew for sure, of the world beyond, the abode of dead souls. Since Jesus said, “*There **was** a certain rich man,*” and “*there **was** a certain beggar,*” you had better believe “***there was!***” There are several things that tell us for sure that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable.

- Jesus never once used *proper names* in his *parables*! In this true story he does.

“*And there was a certain beggar **named Lazarus...***” (Luke 16:20).

“*Lazarus*” four times.

“*...and seeth **Abraham** afar off*” (v. 23).

“*But **Abraham** said, Son remember...*” (v. 25).

“***Abraham** saith unto him...*” (v. 29).

“*They have **Moses** and the prophets...*” (v. 29)

- Parables were always identified as such so there could be no doubt.

“*And he spoke many things unto them in **parables**, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow*” (Matt. 13:3).

“*Hear ye therefore the **parable** of the sower*” (v. 18).

*“Another **parable** put he forth unto them saying, The kingdom of heaven is **likened unto...**” (v. 24).*

*“Another **parable** put he forth unto them saying, The kingdom of heaven is **like to** a grain...(v. 31).*

*“Another **parable** spoke he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is **like unto leaven...**” (v. 33)*

*“All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in **parables**” (v. 34).*

*“...and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the **parable...**” (v. 36). This is the pattern set forth in the four Gospels and it does not fail. Jesus was not ambiguous in his teaching!*

- Jesus gave the true story in Luke sixteen a reference as to the time of its occurrence.

*“Abraham saith unto him, They have **Moses and the prophets**; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). “If they hear not **Moses and the prophets...**” (v. 31). Note: The above verses might refer to the writings of “*Moses and the prophets*” but it still establishes *time*.*

- Jesus **never** began parables with the phrase “*There was.*”

“There was a certain rich man...” (Luke 16:19).

“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus...” (v. 20). Note: If you take this true story from the mouth of Jesus and make it a *parable* to support erroneous doctrine, you do it to your eventual regret.

Did Paul have an out of the body experience?

Those who believe that man does not consist of spirit, soul, and body, but rather a body living with (through?) **breath**, should read Paul’s statements in II Corinthians 12:1-7. He tells of a man, (*himself* - see the word “*revelations*” in verses one and seven), who was “*caught up to the **third heaven**,*” “*into **paradise**”* and “***heard unspeakable words.**”* Look at these remarkable verses:

*“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether **out of the body**, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such a one **caught up to the third heaven**. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or **out of the body**, I cannot tell: God knoweth); How that he was **caught up into paradise... .”***

Now, if you do not believe that Paul’s human spirit lived within his body, pray tell me how he thought he might have been caught up to heaven “*out of the body?*” Could his **breath** have been “*caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words?*” No way! Those who will not take the simple truth of God’s word, create for themselves many dilemmas. A

noted scholar of the “soul sleep” persuasion says in his book, *“Life, Death and Destiny:”*

*“Whether the ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ merely remains inoperative, inert and unconscious after death, **or actually ceases to exist, along with the body, I leave open to question.**”*

My friend, Jesus, Peter, and Paul have already clearly settled that question, and their statements are more than sufficient for me!

“...let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

There is a spirit in man

There are those who **do not believe** that there is a soul or spirit in man that gives life, emotion and will to the body, and that continues in being, even after the death of the body. They believe that when the Bible speaks of man’s *“spirit,”* it is speaking of his *breath*. That can easily be proven by Scripture to be a non-biblical view. It is only necessary to substitute the word *“breath”* for *“spirit”* in a few Bible verses to see the foolishness of that teaching.

*“But **there is a spirit** [breath?] **in man:** and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8).*

*“And it came to pass in the morning that his [Pharaoh’s] **spirit** [breath?] was troubled” (Gen. 41:8).*

“...but they harkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit [breath?] and for cruel bondage” (Ex. 6:9).

“And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit [breath?] made willing” (Ex. 35:21).

“Why is thy spirit [breath?] so sad” (I Kings 21:5).

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit [breath?] before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

“He that hath no rule over his own spirit [breath?] is like a city that is broken down” (Prov. 25:28).

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit [breath?] shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).

“...the Lord hath raised up the spirit [breath?] of the kings of the Medes” (Jer. 51:11).

“Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit [breath?]” (Ezek. 13:3).

“Nebuchadnezzar dreamed, wherewith his spirit [breath?] was troubled”
(Daniel 2:1).

“I Daniel was grieved in my spirit [breath?] in the midst of my body” (Daniel 7:15).

“And the Lord stirred up the spirit [breath?] of Zerubbabel...and the spirit [breath?] of Joshua...and the spirit [breath?] of all the people” (Haggai 1:14).

*“...saith the Lord which...**formeth** the spirit [breath?] of man within him”*
(Zech. 12:1). Note: If God “*formeth the spirit of man within him,*” then the **spirit** of man has a *form*.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit [breath?] indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Question. Does the *breath* of a man have a will? No, but his *spirit* does!

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit [breath?]” (Luke 1:80; 2:40).

“Now while Paul waited...at Athens, his spirit [breath?] was stirred in him”

(Acts 17:16).

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit [breath?], that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

*“For what man **knoweth the things of a man**, save the spirit [breath?] of man **which is in him**” (I Cor. 2:11)? Question. Does a man’s *breath* know what is in him?*

*“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the **flesh**, that the spirit [breath?] may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (I Cor. 5:5).*

*“...that she may be holy **both** in body and in spirit [breath?]” (I Cor. 7:34).*

*“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit [breath?] prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (I Cor. 14:14). Note: Can you imagine Paul saying, “My **breath** prayeth, but...”?*

“For they have refreshed my spirit [breath?] and yours” (I Cor. 16:18).

“I had no rest in my spirit [breath?], because I found not Titus” (II Cor.

2:13).

“...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit [breath?]” (II Cor. 7:1).

“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit [breath?]” (Gal. 6:18).

*“I pray God your whole **spirit** [breath?] and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:23).*

Note: Please stop telling me that the idea that man is “**spirit and soul and body**” originated with Plato. The apostle Paul was no follower of Plato!

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of **soul** and **spirit**, and of the joints and marrow [the **body**]” (Heb. 4:12).*

“My soul [breath?] is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” [Jesus speaking] (Matt. 26:38).

*“And it came to pass, as her **soul was in departing**, (for she died) that*

she called his name Ben-oni” (Gen. 35:18). Note: Death is the departure of the soul and spirit from the body.

*“And fear not them which kill the **body**, but are not able to kill the soul [breath?]: but rather fear him which is able to destroy **both soul and body in hell**” (Matt. 10:28).*

The attributes of the soul and spirit

Scripture does not give us much information regarding the consistency or make-up of our soul-spirit-inner man. It does not seem to make a clear distinction between the soul and spirit of man, but it does tell us this distinction or “*dividing*” can be made (*Heb. 4:12*). But this lack of information should not be surprising since the Bible does not give us details regarding the *glorified bodies* we shall receive at the time of our resurrection at the coming of Jesus.

*“...it doth not yet appear **what we shall be**: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him...” (1 John 3:2).*

*“...the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...” (Phil. 3:21). Note. Our souls have been redeemed and saved, but we are waiting for the “*redemption of our bodies*” (Rom. 8:23-24).*

However, we are told that in our resurrected bodies we will be immortal [deathless] (*I Cor. 15:52-54*), we shall “*know*” even as also we are “*known*” (*I Cor. 13:12*), etc. Obviously more could be written about this but mostly these are “*secret things*” that “*belong unto the Lord our God*” (*Deut. 29:29*).

However, regarding our soul or spirit man, the Bible teaches us clearly that it is a living entity that can see, hear, talk, feel, and remember (*Luke 16:22-28; Rev. 6:9-11*). And in the series of Scriptures above in which was inserted “*breath?*,” we learned many other things concerning the attributes of the spirit that is “*in man*” (*Job 32:8*). Please consider:

- It can be “*troubled*” (*Gen. 41:8; Daniel 2:10*).
- It can feel “*anguish*” (*Ex. 6:9*).
- It can be “*willing*” or “*made willing*” (*Ex. 35:21; Matt. 26:41*).
- It can be “*sad*” (*I Kings 21:5*).
- It can be “*haughty*” (*Prov. 16:18*).
- It takes flight at death and returns “*to God who gave it*” (*Eccl. 12:7*).
- It can lead a person foolishly (*Ezek. 13:3*).
- It can be “*grieved*” (*Daniel 7:15*).
- It is “*in the midst*” of the body (*Daniel 7:15*).
- It can be “*stirred up*” (*Haggai 1:14; Acts 17:16*).
- God has “**formed** the spirit of man within him” (*Zech. 12:1*). So the “*spirit of man within him*” for sure has a **form**!
- The spirit of man can grow “*strong*” (*Luke 1:80; 2:40*).

- It can “bear witness” with the Holy Spirit “that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).
- It can **know** “the things of a man” from within (I Cor. 2:11).
- The spirit of a man “may be saved in the day of the Lord” (I Cor. 5:5).
- The human spirit can be “holy” (I Cor. 7:34).
- The human spirit can pray when the mind does not understand what is being said (I Cor. 14:14; see also 14:2).
- It can be “refreshed” (I Cor. 16:18).
- It can “rest” (II Cor. 2:13; Rev. 6:11).
- The human spirit can be cleansed from “filthiness” (II Cor. 7:1).
- The human “spirit” can be preserved blameless along with the “soul and body” (I Thess. 5:23).
- The human “spirit” can be distinguished and “divided asunder” from the human “soul” (Heb. 4:12; I Thess. 5:3).
- Death for humans is the departure of the spirit from the body (Gen. 35:18; see also Gen. 49:33; Job 14:10; Matt. 27:50; Acts 5:10).

More Regarding What Happens At Death and Beyond

*“Then [at death] shall the **dust** return to the earth as it was: and the **spirit** shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).*

*“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and **everlasting contempt**”*

[literally, *eternal abhorring*]” (Daniel 12:2).

*“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** delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire**” (Rev. 20:12, 13, 15).*

Will The Wicked Cease To Exist In Hell?

For the answer to this tremendous question these biblical facts should be considered. When Jesus Christ returns to the earth as pictured in Revelation chapter nineteen, the “beast” [Anti-christ] and the “false prophet,” are “both cast **alive** into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (v. 20). These are two flesh and blood men. The “Devil” [“Satan”] is bound and cast into the bottomless pit (not the lake of fire), for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

*“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison... . And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, **where the beast and the false prophet are**, and shall be tormented day and night **forever and ever**” (Rev. 20:7, 10).*

The Greek to English Interlinear Bible (Green) says of Revelation 20:10:

*“...and **they** [these men and the Devil] will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.”*

Please notice that these two men had been “cast alive into a lake of fire burning,” 1000 years before Satan arrived there, but they were **still alive** and “**they** will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

The same Interlinear Bible says from the **Greek text**:

*“And a third angel followed them, saying in a voice great, If **anyone** the beast worships and the image of it, and receives a mark on the forehead of him, or on the hand of him, even **he** shall drink of the wine of the anger of the God, having been mixed undiluted in the cup of the wrath of Him, and will be tormented by fire and brimstone before the holy angels, and before the Lamb. **And the smoke of the torment of them goes up to ages of ages; and not have rest day and night** those worshipping the beast and the image of it; even **if anyone** receives the mark of the name of it” (Rev. 14:9-11). Question. Who is authorized to disagree with God or who would **dare judge Him** for His righteous actions?*

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”

(Rom. 9:14-15).

And Paul continues:

*“Nay but, **O man, who art thou that repliest against God?** Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor. What if God, **willing to show his wrath**, and to make his power known, **endured with much long-suffering** the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction... (Rom. 9:20-22)?*

*“It is a **fearful thing** to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).*

*“Behold therefore the goodness and **severity** of God” (Rom. 11:22).*

*“...**fear him** which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).*

*“Knowing therefore the **terror** of the Lord, we persuade men” (II Cor. 5:11).*

Hell Is Not The Grave

The word “*hell*” is found in the Bible some fifty-three times. In the Old Testament it is the Hebrew word “*sheol*” (Strong’s #7585), which means “*the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat).*” In the New Testament it is the Greek words ¹ “***hades***” (Strong’s #86) “*the place of departed souls;*” ² “***geenna***” (Strong’s #1067) “*valley of the son of Hinnom; gehenna, a valley of Jerusalem, used [by Jesus] as a name for the place of everlasting punishment - hell;*” and ³ “***Tartaros***” (Strong’s #5020) “*the deepest abyss of Hades; to incarcerate in eternal torment,*” the place where sinning angels were cast (II Peter 2:4). None of these references speak of the grave. Once, the word “*hell*” (*sheol*) is used by Jonah to describe the putrid, hot, and hopeless place he found himself in when he disobeyed God (Jonah 2:20). Sin is rebellion against God. In fact rebellion is the heart of all sin! The idea that God has only assigned the wicked who rebel against Him to the grave is not a biblical idea.

“...God is angry with the wicked every day” (Ps. 7:11).

“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell...” (Deut. 32:22).

Let me say at this point that the belief in *unconditional* eternal security is Calvin’s doctrine and should be given back to him, the ideas that soul’s are “purified in Purgatory” and “Mary is the Mother of God” is Catholic doctrine and should be given back to them, the teaching that “seed” in the Bible means *money* is Prosperity Preacher doctrine and should be given back to them (Jesus said, “*The **seed** is the word of God*” Luke 8:11), likewise the belief that

“hell is the grave” is Jehovah Witness doctrine and should be hastily given back to them by all Bible believing Christians.

As we did with the words “*spirit*” and “*breath*,” we should substitute the word “*grave*” for “*hell*” in a few Bible verses and see how erroneous that teaching is. For example one already cited:

“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell [grave?]” (Deut. 32:22). Question. Have you ever seen a grave with fire in it?

“The wicked shall be turned into hell [the grave?], and all the nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17).

*“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the **pains of hell** [the grave?] got hold upon me” (Ps. 116:3).*

*“Therefore hell [the grave?] hath enlarged **herself**, and opened **her** mouth without measure: and their glory...shall descend into it” (Isa. 5:14).*

*“Hell [the grave?] from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it **stirreth up the dead** for thee...” (Isa. 14:9).*

*“...but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of **hell** [the grave?] **fire**” [Jesus speaking] (Matt. 5:22).*

*“And if thy right **eye** offend thee, **pluck it out**, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into **hell** [the grave?]. And if thy right hand offend thee...and not that thy whole body should be cast into **hell** [the grave?].” [Jesus speaking] (Matt. 5:29-30).*

*“I will build my church; and the gates of **hell** [the grave?] shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).*

*“And if thy hand offend thee, **cut it off**: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into **hell** [the grave?], into the **fire** that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the **fire** is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, **cut it off**: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be **cast into hell**, into the **fire** that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the **fire** is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, **pluck it out**: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be **cast into hell fire**: Where their worm dieth not, and the **fire** is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-48). Note carefully: Jesus was not warning the*

wicked regarding ceasing to exist and being separated from God. The wicked do not love God and care nothing about being separated from Him. Rather, Jesus is warning the wicked regarding “fire” - “fire” - “fire,” being “cast into hell,” being “cast into hell fire,” and “fire that never shall be quenched!” According to our Lord, whatever pain a person inflicted upon themselves by plucking out an eye or cutting of a hand or foot, would be far less and “better” than the pain of hell. Wow!

*“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers how can ye escape the damnation of **hell** [the grave?]” (Matt. 23:33)?*

*“And in **hell** [the grave?] he lifted up his eyes, being in **torments**...and he cried...I am **tormented** in this **flame**” (Luke 16:23-24).*

*“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to **hell** [the grave?], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement... . The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to **reserve the unjust** unto the day of judgement **to be punished**” (II Peter: 4, 9).*

*“Then shall he say also unto them [the “**nations**” - v. 32] on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting** [Greek - aionios - Strong’s*

#166 - “perpetual - eternal” **fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels”
[Jesus speaking] (Matt. 25:41). Notice the similarity between this verse
and Psalm 9:17; “The wicked shall be turned into **hell** and all the **nations**
that forget God.”

“And these shall go away into **everlasting** [aionios - “perpetual - eternal”]
punishment: but the righteous into **life eternal**” (Matt. 25:46).

To all who believe that hell is the grave, that there is no fire, and the punishment is not
eternal, I have a word of advise, **don’t bet on it!**

Where are dead saints?

The prophet King David makes an unusual but comforting statement in Psalm 116:15:

*“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the **death** of his saints.”*

This brings us to the tremendous questions as to what happens at the time of death for
saved people and where is the place of their abode. Again, there is only one source to find
the real answer and that is in God’s holy Bible. Look at Ecclesiastes 12:7:

*“Then [at death] shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit
shall **return** unto **God** who gave it.”*

*“Behold, all souls are **mine**; as the soul **of the father**, so also the soul **of***

the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).

So at the time of death the *spirit* or *soul* of man returns “*unto God who gave it,*” and is then assigned to one of two places, a temporary place of torment or a temporary place of comfort. In the Old Testament both compartments were located in the “*heart of the earth*” (sheol). According to the lesson Jesus gave in Luke chapter sixteen concerning the rich man and Lazarus, these two places were separated by an unpassable “*gulf*” (Luke 16:26). We are not told the name of the place of “*torments*” but Jesus said that after the rich man “*died and was buried*” [his body], in his spirit “*in hell he lifted up his eyes*” and could **see, hear, talk, feel** and **remember**.

According to Jesus “*the beggar died, and was carried* [his spirit or soul, not his body] *by the angels into Abraham’s bosom*” (v. 22). Before Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, “*leading a multitude of captives in his train,*” Abraham’s bosom was also called *Paradise*.

Notice Jesus’ words to the repentant thief on the cross:

“*Verily [truly] I say unto thee, **Today** shalt thou be with me in **paradise***”

(Luke 23:43).

Jesus and the thief both died that day before sundown but they were not buried together. Jesus was buried in Joseph’s tomb and the thief was buried in the “*potter’s field.*” But trust Jesus, they both awoke that day in *spirit*, together, “*in paradise.*” When Jesus ascended to heaven some forty-three days later with his “*multitude of captives,*” Paradise was moved

to the “*third heaven*,” the place of God’s throne. Notice II Corinthians 12:2-4:

*“...whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell...caught up to the **third heaven**...caught up **into paradise**, and heard unspeakable words...”* [the apostle Paul speaking].

If we study closely the teachings of Paul we will see that he did not believe man to be just a breathing body, a living, breathing organism, but rather a *spirit being*, housed by a body.

Notice his clear statements in II Corinthians chapter five.

*“For we know that, if our **earthly house** [body] of this **tabernacle** were dissolved [killed - - destroyed], we have a **building** [body - - structure] of God, a **house** not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this [body - house - tabernacle] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our **house** [glorified body] which is from heaven. If so be that being **clothed** we shall not be found **naked** [a spirit without a body]. For we that are in this tabernacle [body] do groan [suffer], being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality [our mortal bodies] might be swallowed up of life”* (II Cor. 5:1-4).

Paul continues:

*“Therefore 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, I say, and willing rather to be **absent from the***

body, and to be present with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:6-8). Question. What is so hard to understand about that? Did you learn as a child what it meant to be **absent** from school? You simply were not there! “...**absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**” And there is more!

*“Wherefore we labor, that, whether **present** or **absent** [“from the body” - previous verse, same subject], we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that everyone may receive [reward for] the things **done in his body**, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore **the terror of the Lord**, we persuade men” (II Cor. 5:9-11).*

Paul’s use of the word “*tabernacle*” in verses one and four above, tells us much regarding his view that the body is the dwelling of our inner man, the soul or spirit. This is the Greek word “*skenoma*” (Strong’s #4638) and it means “*an encampment.*” Paul is remembering the Old Testament *tabernacle*, which was God’s **temporary residence** in the wilderness, and is using it as a type of the mortal body being the temporary residence of the soul. Strong’s says, a further meaning of “*skenoma*” is “*the body (as a tenement for the soul).*”

WRITE ON “INWARD MAN...OUTWARD MAN.”

The apostle Peter believed exactly as Paul did regarding this important truth. Consider his

statements in II Peter 1:13-15.

*“Yea, I think it meet [fitting], as long as I am **in this tabernacle**, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must **put off this tabernacle**, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me [Jesus had predicted Peter’s death in John 21:18-19]. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my **decease** [i.e. “my death when I put off my tabernacle”] to have these things always in remembrance.”*

Paul’s unusual decision

Perhaps because of the great amount of suffering that he had endured for Christ, Paul was given a most unusual opportunity. He had the privilege to decide whether he would live or die. Please note that his choice was not whether he should live to keep on ministering, **or** whether to die and have his total being lay in the grave for 1900 years. Rather, his choice was whether to “live,” **or** whether “to depart, and to be with Christ, which is **far better**.” He says in Philippians chapter one:

*“...so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by **life**, or by **death**. For me to live is Christ, and **to die is gain**. But if I live in the **flesh**, this is the fruit of my labor: yet **what I shall choose** I wot [know] not. For I am in a strait [difficult place] betwixt two, **having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**: Nevertheless to **abide in the flesh** is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall **abide** and continue with you...” (Phil. 1:20-25).*

We know that Paul did die not long afterward and he **departed** *“to be with Christ.”* This great Apostle used the words *“depart,” “departing,”* and *“departure”* numerous times in his writings and he for sure knew their meanings. The root meaning of *“depart”* is *“to divide, separate”* (into parts), with the further meanings of 1. *“To go away from; leave,”* or 2. *“To set out; start.”* Notice Paul’s statements:

*“For I know this, that after my **departing** shall grievous wolves enter in...”*
(Acts 20:29).

*“For I am now ready to be offered [killed], and the time of my **departure** is at hand” (II Tim. 4:6).*

Paul knew the word *“death”* and used it many times as well, but in these verses he looks beyond the *death* of his body to the *departure* of his soul *“to be with Christ.”* Yes, Paul saw death as *“sleep,”* but only as sleep for the body, however for the soul there awaited a *“departure.”* For further proof look at I Thessalonians 4:14.

*“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep** in Jesus **will God bring with him.**”*

Notice carefully, God will bring the sleeping saints back to earth with Jesus. Look at this verse in the *New International Version*.

“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God

will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him” (I Thess. 4:14 NIV).

The *God’s Word* translation makes it even clearer:

*“We believe that Jesus died and came back to life. We also believe that, through Jesus, God will **bring back** those who have died. **They will come back with Jesus**” (I Thess. 4:14 - God’s Word).*

Jude, the half brother of Jesus believed exactly as Jesus, Peter, and Paul did concerning the whereabouts of the dead in Christ. He pictured the return of our Lord to planet Earth in Jude verse 14 thus:

*“Behold, the Lord cometh **with ten thousands of his saints**, To execute judgement upon all...”*

Jude tells us that this prophecy goes all the way back to Enoch *“the seventh from Adam,”* so this view has been held by people of God for a mighty long time. Note. Enoch predated Plato by many centuries.

Does the Bible picture dead saints in heaven?

Those who teach that when a person dies the entirety of their being [soul, spirit, breath?] sleeps in the grave until resurrection day at the coming of Christ, certainly have a problem with what John saw in Revelation 6:9-11.

*“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw **under the altar** the **souls** of them that were **slain** for the word of God, and the testimony which they held: And **they cried with a loud voice**, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge them that **dwell on the earth?** And **white robes** were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should **rest** yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be **killed as they were**, should be fulfilled.”*

The first question that arises upon reading the above verses is, where is this altar that John saw (“*I saw under the altar*”)? Consider. There are seven references to *this “altar”* in the book of Revelation and it **always** refers to the golden altar that is before the throne of God in heaven. Notice these references.

*“And another angel came and stood at the **altar**...that he should offer it [incense] with the prayers of all saints upon the **golden altar** which was **before the throne**. And the smoke of the incense...ascended up **before God** out of the angel’s hand” (Rev. 8:3-4).*

*“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the **golden altar** which is **before God**” (Rev. 9:13).*

*“And another angel came out of the temple which is **in heaven**, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the **altar**, which*

had power...” (Rev. 14:17-18).

*“And I heard another out of the **altar** say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgements” (Rev. 16:7).*

There can be no doubt that this **altar** that John saw in Revelation 6:9 is the *true altar* in heaven. Now let us establish other facts from this account.

- These were “*souls*” under the altar crying out to be avenged. This is not *blood* crying out to be avenged like the blood of Abel crying to God (*Gen. 4:10*). These were **souls** crying out, “*judge and avenge our **blood***” (*Rev. 6:10*).
- These were **souls** of the **dead**, as they had been “*slain*” (v. 9) - “*killed*” (v. 11).
- Like the rich man who died that Jesus told of in Luke 16:24, these dead could speak. “*And they cried with a loud voice, saying,...*” (*Rev. 6:19*).
- Like the rich man in hell, these dead saints in heaven could remember *earth*. “*...dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that **dwell on the earth***” (v. 10).
- Like the rich man, they could hear. “*...and it was **said** unto them*” (v. 11).
- Unlike the rich man who was “*tormented,*” they had “*rest*”!

*“And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should **rest** yet for a little season...” (v. 11).*

Compare this verse to Revelation 14:13:

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the

dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may **rest** from their labors... ." Rest, not in the grave, but in heaven with Christ. Remember: "God will **bring back** those who have died. **They will come back with Christ**" (1 Thess. 4:14 - God's Word translation).

Great news! John saw these martyred "souls" again, and their circumstances had changed considerably!

*"...and I saw the **souls** of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God...and **they lived** [were resurrected] and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).*

Jesus' lesson to the Sadducees

One group of religious people that Jesus encountered during his earthly ministry, and one that his message antagonized, was the small but powerful sect of the Sadducees. Their doctrine was strange in two main areas, (1) they denied the existence of angels or spirits, and (2) they denied the resurrection and a future life. It has been said that their denial of the latter was why they were Sad-you-see. Since Jesus and his disciples after him taught both the existence of angels and a future resurrection, the Bible records many of their conflicts with the Sadducees.

Luke 20:27-38 tells of an interesting encounter between Jesus and these sad people.

Jesus with his wisdom had just silenced the chief priests and scribes when the Sadducees came to try their hand again at stumping him. They had made up a story about a woman who had been married to seven different men and ended it with this question:

“Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife” (v. 33).

As always, Jesus had the answer.

“...they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God...” (Luke 20:35-36).

But Jesus did not stop there, as he had proof from their own Scriptures regarding the dead, and their future lives. Notice closely:

“Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (v. 37).

Jesus repeats the words written down by Moses, recording God’s declaration of who He is at the burning bush. Then Jesus continues.

*“For he is not a God of the **dead**, but **of the living: for all live unto him**” (v. 38).*

Jesus' words to the Sadducees teach us more than the doctrine of the resurrection. In addition we can deduce that:

1. Jesus believed that the account of Moses' encounter with God in a burning bush was an actual occurrence and not a myth.
2. Jesus believed that the blessed lineage is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and not Abraham, Ishmael and Kedar as the Muslims teach.
3. Jesus believed that those who are "dead" are in some very real sense "living," **"for all live unto him."** The NIV says:

"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

Jesus did not believe that a "living God" would have invoked the names of, and identified Himself with, three men from the past who were just "dead." Yes, when Jesus spoke, their bodies were dead and buried in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron, but their souls or spirits were "living in a place of temporary comfort," for to God **"all are alive."** In fact, according to Jesus, the place of temporary comfort for souls in the "heart of the earth" was called, "Abrahams bosom" (Luke 16:22-23). Notice carefully again Jesus' words:

"For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living..." (v. 38).

Jesus' lesson to the Sadducees was, that since the *spirits* of these patriarchs were "alive" even as Jesus spoke, this also proves that these will someday be rejoined with their *bodies* in a *resurrection!*

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus neither taught "soul sleep" or experienced "soul sleep!"