

# 14



## What Happens When We Die?

**FRANCIS BACON ONCE WROTE, “MEN FEAR DEATH, AS CHILDREN FEAR TO GO IN THE DARK; AND AS THAT NATURAL FEAR IN CHILDREN IS INCREASED WITH TALES, IS THE OTHER.” THE THOUGHT OF DYING HAS TERRIFIED THE HUMAN RACE EVER SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF SIN TO OUR PLANET. OVER THE CENTURIES, THIS NATURAL FEAR HAS BEEN COMPOUNDED BY THE TELLING OF TALES - MANY OF WHICH SIMPLY ARE NOT TRUE. THE EARLY INROADS OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY INTO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND THE IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION OF THE DARK AGES WERE PARTICULARLY BAD INFLUENCES.**

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Most people are terrified of death simply because they don't feel they have good answers. What really happens after we die? You can't ask those who have done it - they're silent! You can't trust what the psychics and spirit mediums have to say, either, because in the final analysis, they've never actually experienced death. They're not experts! So where do we turn for answers? According to the Bible, there is an expert. In **Revelation 1:18**, Jesus assures us that He has passed through death, is now alive forevermore, and has the keys to death and hell! If you want the truth about death, turn to the Word of God.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7** gives us the Bible formula for death: when we die, our bodies return to dust, and our “spirit” goes back to God. **Genesis 2:7** gives us the opposite formula. When God first created life, He took dust, breathed into it “the breath of life” and man became a living soul. (It's important to note that the Bible says that man did not receive a living soul, he became one.) The “spirit” of **Ecclesiastes 12:7** and the “breath of life” of **Genesis 2:7** are virtually synonymous. They're talking about the same thing. Our “spirit” is the “breath” or gift of life that God gives to us. **Job 27:3** informs us that the “spirit of God” is in our nostrils. Sometimes the word “spirit” in the Bible simply refers to “breath”!

**THE BIBLE'S FORMULA FOR LIFE AND DEATH ARE SIMPLE**  
*DUST + BREATH OF LIFE = LIVING SOUL*

*LIVING SOUL - SPIRIT/BREATH = DUST*  
According to the Bible, we do not have a soul, we are one (*see Genesis 2:7 again*). When we die, we are not immediately whisked off into the presence of God. Instead, we rest in the grave until Jesus returns. **Psalm 146:3,4** tells us that after we die, we no longer have any thoughts. **Psalm 115:17** clearly states that the dead “do not praise the Lord” - which is most certainly what they'd be doing if they were immediately carried into His presence! **Job 7:9,10**; **Ecclesiastes 9:5,6** and **Ecclesiastes 9:10** all make it very clear that once we are dead, we stop functioning. We have no thoughts, we experience no emotions, we have no wisdom or knowledge, and we have nothing to do with this earth anymore

In **John 11:1-14**, when Lazarus died, Jesus referred to it as a “sleep” - a description of death used by the Bible more than 50 times! In **John 11:23,24**, we see what people in Jesus' day understood to be the truth about death: Martha expected that she would see her brother again after the resurrection on the last day. This is the teaching on the subject of death all through the Bible. **1 Thessalonians 4:15-18** makes it clear that the dead sleep until the Second Coming, when Jesus will open the graves and raise the dead. **1 Corinthians 15:51-55** teaches that the dead who are sleeping will be raised at the last trump and given glorious, immortal resurrection bodies like the one Jesus rose from the dead with. (*Compare with Philippians 3:20*). Peter ran into trouble with the Pharisees because he was

preaching the hope of the resurrection! (*Acts 4:1,2*) Nowhere does the Bible teach the concept of an “immortal soul”. **1 Timothy 6:15,16** makes it clear that only God is immortal. We are not! In fact, **Ezekiel 18:4,20** states unequivocally that “souls” that sin will die! (*Remember: the wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23*). So what actually happens when we die? **Job 14:12-14** gives an excellent summary:

- We sleep until the heavens be no more.
- We are resurrected when the wrath of God is past.
- We rest in the graves until our change comes.

These things all happen in connection with the Second Coming of Christ! (*See Revelation 6:14, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 15:1, 1 Corinthians 15:51*). Job didn't expect to live again until the return of Christ! That was the case with all of God's people through the ages. The Bible teaches a resurrection, not a “floating away to heaven.” The concept that the dead do not really die comes straight from the serpent's mouth. Satan has always tried to downplay the consequences of sin. “Ye shall not surely die,” he told Eve. (*Genesis 3:1-4*) Today, many well meaning people still believe that when we die, we don't really die - we're simply ushered off to a “better place.” But the Bible teaches clearly that death is really death. Notice in **Acts 2:29,34** that Peter publicly taught that David - a man after God's own heart - is not in heaven yet! He will remain in the grave until Jesus returns to give out our eternal rewards. (*Revelation 22:12*) In **2 Timothy 4:7,8**, when Paul realized that he was about to die, he told Timothy that he expected his reward on “that day” - the day of Jesus' “appearing”. When Jesus comes, death will lose its sting. That's why Paul tells us to “comfort one another” with the teaching of the resurrection. (*1 Thessalonians 4:18*). Finally, on that glorious morning, we will be able to say, “Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

**HANG ON A MINUTE!** What about the concept of the immortal soul. Where did that come from? The immortal soul found its way into Christianity courtesy of Greek paganism. Throughout much of the Dark Ages, we believed in it, even though there is no Bible evidence for it. To this day, people defend the concept with one or two Bible texts that seem to contradict what the rest of the Bible has to say on the subject: **(1) Luke 23:42,43** In this story, Jesus seems to tell the thief that he

will be joining Him in heaven that very day. There are three problems with that understanding:

- The thief asks to be remembered when Jesus sets up His kingdom. That doesn't happen until the Second Coming - remember the stone in Daniel 2?
- Jesus didn't go to heaven that day. John 20:17 informs us that three days later, Jesus still had not been to heaven!
- The thief didn't die that day. **John 19:30-34** tells us that at sundown, they had to break the thieves' legs because they were still alive. So how do we understand **Luke 23:43**?

It's simple. There was no punctuation in the original Greek; Middle Ages scholars simply inserted it where they thought it fit. Move the comma, and the verse makes more sense: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise.” The promise was made that day. The fulfillment of that promise takes place when Jesus returns.

**(2) 2 Corinthians 5:8** seems to tell us that the moment we die, we go to be with the Lord. However, when you consider that elsewhere (*1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15*) Paul clearly taught a resurrection, it's clear that he couldn't possibly mean that. To make this passage teach an immortal soul is to take it out of context. Read it in the context of what comes before it (*2 Corinthians 5:1-8*). Paul talks about three possible states of being:

1. “*Our earthly house*”; “at home in the body”; “in this we groan”. This is speaking of the earthly, corruptible bodies that we have right now.
2. “*A building of God*”; “a house not made with hands”; “eternal in the heavens”; “our house which is from heaven”. This is speaking of the glorious resurrection bodies we will receive when Christ returns.
3. “*Unclothed*”; “*naked*”. This is the state of human beings when they're between their earthly and their heavenly house. We're dead. We're naked. We have no home. With the context of the rest of Scripture, it's impossible to read an “immortal soul” into this passage.

In **verse 8**, Paul is simply saying that he would rather be absent from his earthly body and present with the Lord. There is no time frame given. He desires to be present with the Lord in the heavenly body or “house” (*see verse 1*). It doesn't say that he will be present with the Lord without a body.

More than 60 Bible passages refer to death as a “sleep”!

Deut. 31:16

2 Sam 7:12

1 Kings 1:21, 2:10, 11:21, 11:43, 14:20, 14:31, 15:8, 15:24, 16:6, 16:28, 22:40, 22:50

2 Kings 8:24, 10:35, 13:9, 13:13, 14:16, 14:22, 14:29, 15:7, 15:22, 15:38, 16:20, 20:21, 21:18, 24:6; 2

Chronicles 9:31, 12:16, 14:1, 16:13, 21:1, 26:2, 26:23, 27:9, 28:27, 32:33, 33:20

Job 7:21, 14:12

Psalms 13:3, 76:6

Jeremiah 51:39, 51:57

Daniel 12:2

Matthew 9:18, 9:23-24, 27:52

Mark 5:39

Luke 8:52-53

John 11:11-14

Acts 7:60, 13:36

1 Corinthians 11:30, 15:6, 15:18, 15:20, 15:51

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 5:9-10

2 Peter 3:4

# Quick Quiz

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Our heavenly Father has so much He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible - our Textbook for this seminar - offers **Lessons For Living!**

## Lesson 14 - What Happens When We Die?

**1. True or False** Since Jesus called the Devil “the father of lies and lying, it’s interesting to note that Satan’s first lie on this earth - to Eve in the Garden of Eden was about death and dying. **To check your answer, see John 8:44 and Genesis 3:1-4**

**2.** If God alone is immortal, then neither man nor angels are. And the inspired Apostle Paul says it’s “the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who \_\_\_\_\_ hath \_\_\_\_\_ . **To check your answer, see 1 Timothy 6:15-16**

**3.** The Bible teaches that when a man dies, “His \_\_\_\_\_ goeth forth, he returns to his \_\_\_\_\_ ; in that very day his \_\_\_\_\_ . **To check your answer, see Psalms 146:4**

**4.** God settles the matter that man is MORTAL - subject to death - and that he does NOT possess a so called “immortal soul” when He repeats plainly: “The \_\_\_\_\_ who sins shall \_\_\_\_\_ . **To check your answer, see Ezekiel 18:4 and 20**

**5. True or False** The Bible says that when we die, our BODY returns as dust to the earth as it was, and our BREATHE returns to God in heaven. **To check your answer, see Ecclesiastes 12:7 and James 2:26**

**6.** Bible writers consistently refer to death as a dreamless, unconscious sleep. The Psalmist David prayed, “Hear me, O Lord my God: lighten my eyes, lest I \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ . **To check your answer, see Psalm 13:3**

**7.** The Bible asks, “Shall \_\_\_\_\_ man be more just than God?” And when Jesus comes, “We shall all be CHANGED, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this \_\_\_\_\_ must \_\_\_\_\_ immortality. **To check your answer, see Job 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53**