

WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE DEAD?

One of the most misunderstood subjects in the Bible is the state of the dead. The main barrier to gaining a clear understanding of this subject is the teaching which assumes that humans have an immortal soul and that, at death, this soul goes to heaven, hell, paradise, or someplace in-between.

Because this belief in the immortality of the soul is extremely comforting, most people avoid thinking about the validity of the today's popular teachings about heaven and hell. Therefore, the clear logical scriptures that speak of the state of the dead being something other than life are avoided like the plague, simply because they threaten the very foundation of the teaching of an immortal soul.

Surprising as it may seem the popular teaching that humans have an immortal soul and that, at death, this soul goes to heaven, hell, paradise, or someplace in-between can not be supported by Bible.

However, what the Bible does say about the state of the dead is extremely interesting and fits perfectly within God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

If you want to know what the Bible actually says about the state of the dead and what actually happens to a person at death when the body is no longer capable of sustaining a life function, you might want to pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast. Because, you will hear things that very few people understand or teach.

Although the beliefs of Catholics and Protestants differ radically in many respects, both believe in the immortality of the soul. They also believe that humans only die physically, but the spirit (that is, the soul—the sentient being) remains alive in heaven, hell, or some transitory state in-between.

However, the Protestant theology of going to heaven or hell immediately upon death cannot be proven from the Bible. Moreover, the Catholic concept of purgatory as a place or condition of spiritual cleansing is also a non-biblical teaching.

Neither of these teachings are valid biblical concepts; they are merely figments of theological imagination, which were conceived to explain the state of the dead in the context of humans having an immortal soul.

What happens to humans at death? Do they go to heaven, hell, or somewhere in between? Do they go anywhere? Are they alive in another dimension, or do they cease to exist? If one studies the Bible and believes what it actually says, these questions can be answered truthfully.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

In order to understand the state of the dead, it is important to understand what a human being is. Is the sum total of what God created as human visible and discernible? Many theologians and others believe that humans have a soul which is non-physical. The Bible does say that humans have a spirit; however, is this spirit a physical creation or is it from another dimension of existence?

The Bible clearly shows that there are two distinct dimensions of existence, and that humans are composed of elements from both dimensions. There is both a physical and a spiritual dimension of existence and each is separate from the other in function and creation. But, both work together to enable humans to exist on a higher plane of consciousness than the rest of the physical creation:

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10, verse 28:

"Do not fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [God the Father] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt.10:28 KJV).

The English word 'body' in this verse is a translation of the Greek word 'soma,' which means 'a human/animal body' or 'a corpse'. The Greek word for 'soul' is 'psyche', which can be translated 'life' or 'mind'. Jesus mentions two distinct elements of human life: physical and non-physical. Moreover, both elements can be completely destroyed by the Sovereign God.

The English word 'destroy' is a translation of the Greek word 'apollumi', which means 'to destroy fully', 'to kill', 'to perish', and 'to completely do away with'. There is no doubt that Jesus said that God has the power to completely destroy all aspects of human life.

Jesus says that there are two elements of the human existence and we must fear God who can terminate both the physical and non-physical elements.

THE PHYSICAL ELEMENT OF THE HUMAN CREATION

In order to determine what the physical element of human life is, we will need to review what the Bible says about the creation of humans:

Genesis chapter 2, verse 7 says:

"And the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen.2:7 Para.). See also vs.8; Deut.32:18.

The English word 'soul' is the translation of the Hebrew word 'nephesh', which means 'a breathing creature or animal', 'vitality', 'beast', 'body', or 'breath'. There is absolutely nothing in the word 'nephesh' that indicates anything other than physical life. The Hebrew word 'nephesh' literally means 'a state of being alive'. God created a lifeless body in the form of man and made it a living soul (nephesh) by blowing air into its lungs; thus, giving it life.

PHYSICAL LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

In the Book of Leviticus chapter 17, we are told that the life of a human is in the blood.

Beginning in verse 10:

"And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eats any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul [nephesh] that eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; . . .Therefore I said to the children of Israel, No soul of you shall

eat blood,. . . (That is, no nephesh of you shall eat blood) For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof:. . ." (Lev.17:10-14 KJV).

In this age, we can understand the biological implications of this statement. The heart circulates the blood throughout the body, which in turn performs its life sustaining functions.

If God had not activated Adam's life functions by inserting air into his lungs, Adam would not have lived. But, is human life no more than a chemical-electric reaction of a well designed structure of gas, fluid, and solid matter reacting to internal and external stimuli? Is this the sum of what God created as physical man? If so, humans would be no different from any other animal.

But humans are different from animals and the rest of creation in many obvious ways. Humans are on a higher plane of existence than the rest of creation. But, what is it that makes mankind different? The unseen physical and spirit elements of the human creation makes it different from the rest of creation.

THE SPIRITUAL ELEMENT OF THE HUMAN CREATION

There is another element to human life besides the physical. This element is the spirit in man that separates mankind from the rest of creation:

Job said, "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding" (Job 32:8 KJV).

The English word 'spirit' is a translation of the Hebrew word 'ruwach', which means 'wind' or 'mind'. It does not mean a physical being or even a being at all. Rather, it denotes something that is not physical.

The prophet Zechariah said this about the creation of the spirit in man:

"The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, says the Lord, which stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him" (Zech.12:1 KJV). See also

Ecc.12:5-7.

Notice that the spirit of man is formed within him. The human spirit is a non-physical element of the human body that truly separates humans from the rest of the physical creation. God calls this non-physical element the spirit in man and he has designed it to be a part of the human body. It is this spirit that gives mankind the ability to be on a higher thought-plane than all other creations on earth.

The spirit in man is only one of the two elements of human life that the scientific community does not understand or ascribe to human life function. Nevertheless, the spirit in man is of major importance to human life after death.

THE GOD OF SPIRITS

The Bible shows that God formed the spirit that lives within the human body. Animals do not have the potential for immortality and they do not relate to God in the same way as humans. Furthermore, they do not have the ability to worship or interface with God (Rom.8:14-16):

As Moses and Aaron were beseeching God for the lives of the Israelites:

"They fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?" (Num.16:22 Para.). See also Num.27:16.

The spirit in man is not an undefinable essence nor is it mysteriously apart from man. The spirit of man is man. The physical body is the habitation of the spirit.

THE HUMAN LIFE FORM

Human life is unique in all of creation; a human being is the only life form on earth that is both physical and spiritual and has the opportunity to be elevated to the highest of all life forms: a spirit-being in the Family of God.

If you would like a detailed explanation of the destiny of humanity see our study about immortality and the new creation.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HUMANS DIE?

The Bible describes two major events that take place at the death of a human being and these events are extremely important to the final destiny of each individual, because each event decides whether or not each individual will have a future existence.

What the Bible says about the physical and spirit record and the events that happen to humans after death is very different from what is taught by the religions of this world. According to the Bible, after a human dies, there are two records of their existence: one that is kept in heaven and one that is kept on earth.

NO MENTAL ACTIVITY AFTER DEATH

There is nothing throughout the entire Bible that indicates humans have an immortal soul or that any human life function continues after death. The Bible indicates just the opposite; it clearly shows that the physical life of a human is a temporary condition that can be terminated forever.

At death, the cerebral functions cease, the brain dies and there are no more thought processes, no reward, no memory, no knowledge, no access to this world; the dead are simply dead. They are not alive: Death terminates an individual's interaction with the physical and spiritual dimensions of existence.

King Solomon said this:

"For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in any thing that happens under the sun" (Ecc.9:5-6 NIV).

King Solomon also said:

"All that your hand finds to do, do it with your strength. For there is no work, or planning, or knowledge or wisdom, or the grave, where you go" (Ecc.9:10 Para.).

It is obvious by the abundant scriptural proof that all conscious thought and life-functions cease at death. The scriptures that speak of human speech, desires, and admonitions after death are either poetic metaphors or analogies, or in cases demonic impersonations of dead people.

There is absolutely nothing throughout the entire Bible which indicates that the human life function continues in one state or another after death. Moreover, the Bible indicates just the opposite; it clearly shows that the physical life of a human is a temporary condition, which can be terminated forever.

THE SLEEP OF DEATH

Many scriptures speak of the state of the dead as analogous to sleep. Because the dead do not have a conscious thought process (Psa.146:4; Ecc.9:5-6), sleep is an excellent description of the condition of death. The following are a few references that show how God views the condition of death:

The prophet Daniel said:

"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" (Dan.12:2 KJV).

Job said the following about the state of the dead:

"But man dies and is cut off, and man expires; and where is he? As the waters go from the sea, and a river wastes away and dries up, so man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep. Who will grant that You would hide me in Sheol; You would hide me until Your anger turns back; and You would set a limit for me and remember me? If a man dies, will he revive? All the days of my warfare I will wait, until my change comes" (Job 14:10-14 Para.). See also 1.Kg.2:10,

1.Cor.11:29-30; 1.Thes.4:13-17.

WHERE DOES THE BODY GO AT DEATH?

The billions of humans who have lived and died over the centuries are completely unaware of the passage of time, the interim period between the moment of death when their conscience thoughts ceased and the instant when they wake to life again at the resurrection, does not exist for them. It will be as if they had gone to sleep and awoken without dreaming the passage of time is meaningless to them.

Science defines death as the cessation of the life function, That is, all systems cease to operate—the heart stops circulating blood, the brain stops sending orders to the organs, all thought process cease, the body becomes immobile, all regeneration processes stop, and the body starts to decay.

The Bible defines physical death in the same way as science today:

In Genesis chapter 3, verse 19 we read:

"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground. For you have been taken out of it; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen.3:19 Para.).

God says our bodies were made from the elements of the earth and they will return to these same elements after death.

King Solomon Wrote:

"For that which happens to the sons of men, and that which happens to beasts; even one event is to them. As this one dies, so that one dies; yea, one breath is to all; so that there is to the man no advantage over the beast; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are of the dust, and return to the dust" (Ecc.3:19-20 Para.).

Solomon says that both man and beast have the same death process; they both die and return to the elements from which they are made. There is no quarrel with the scientific definition here. At death

the physical body in which God placed the spirit of man ceases to function. However, the Bible shows that there is more to the physical body than the visible elements from which it is made.

WHERE DOES THE SPIRIT GO AT DEATH?

Solomon asked the same question many have asked over the centuries about the destination of the spirit in man. Solomon asked:

"Who knows the spirit of the sons of man, whether it goes upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goes downward to the earth?" (Ecc.3:21 Para.).

The great difference between Solomon and most people, is that, Solomon knew the answer to his question and said:

"Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it" (Ecc.12:7 Para.).

Solomon said the spirit of man returns to God who gave it. Jesus also understood this when he said just before he died: "Father into your hands I commit my spirit. And saying this, He breathed out the spirit" (Lk.23:46 Para.).

At death, this spirit, which is composed of material from the spirit dimension of existence, returns to God the Father who inhabits the spirit-world.

But is the body more than flesh and blood?

The Bible shows that the human body is just a chemical-electric reaction of a well designed structure of gas, fluids, and solid matter reacting to internal and external stimuli with the spirit of man inhabiting it. And at death, the body becomes lifeless and useless as noted by the apostle James in his instruction about faith and works:

James said, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jms.2:26 KJV).

THE INVISIBLE ELEMENT OF THE BODY

The Bible clearly show two separate elements that are combined to form the creation called a human being. It is also extremely clear that at death the body returns to the earth and the spirit returns to God. However, how do we reconcile the clear scriptures which indicate that a dead person is both in heaven and on the earth?

A brief study into physical and spiritual law will show that an object cannot occupy two different dimensions of time and space simultaneously. This knowledge helps solve the mystery surrounding the scriptures that seem to indicate that the dead are in two places at the same time. See Ecc.12:7, Psa.31:5; 49:14-15 Lk.23:46, Acts 2:27-29;34; Heb. chp. 11.

The Bible clearly shows that there is an invisible physical element to the body that is preserved on earth after the body dies. This invisible element of the human creation is extremely important to the destiny of each individual. Without an understanding of what this essential element is, much of the Bible does not seem to make sense when it comes to the state of the dead and the various resurrections.

THE MYSTERIOUS REPHAIM

There are many scriptures that speak of rephaim in connection with the dead, but who or what is the 'Rephaim'?

Bible Scholars have had great difficulty discovering the intended meaning of this Hebrew word, because its usage indicates that all dead humans remain on earth instead of going to heaven or hell at death, which is commonly believed.

The Hebrew word 'rephaim' has three basic meanings: 'giant men', 'ghost of the dead', or 'shadows'.

There are many scriptural references that refer to the dead as 'rephaim'. These references also indicate that the 'rephaim' occupy 'sheol', which is located within the confines of earth's environment.

The prophet Isaiah's allegorical use of the word 'rephaim' reveals that the 'rephaim' are dead humans

and that the word rephaim describes and reveals an extremely important unseen element of the human body.

Isaiah says this of the destination of the dead, "Sheol below is excited for you, to greet your coming, waiting for you rephaim . . ." (Isa.14:9 Literal Translation)

Isaiah laments the state of the dead and says:

"The dead will not live, rephaim will not rise, therefore you have punished and eliminated them, and caused their memory to perish" (Isa.26:14 Literal Translation).

After making this statement, Isaiah says that there is hope for the dead because the 'rephaim' in the dust of the earth will be resurrected:

"The dead will live, their corpses will rise, Awake and shout for joy, dwellers in the dust! For dew of lights [morning] is your dew, and earth will give birth to rephaim" (Isa.26:19 Literal Translation).

There are many scriptures when studied in context show that this thing spoken of as a 'rephaim' is a part of the human creation. The question is what part? The scriptures show that the rephaim are in sheol, have no conscious thought, are lifeless, and will be resurrected. See also Psa.6:5, 31:17, Pro.9:18,21:16, Isa.14:19; 26:14-19.

The rephaim cannot be any part of the spirit of man, because the spirit of man returns to God at death. But the rephaim are in a state of preservation on earth. Listen to what I have to say closely, because I am going to reveal a great mystery of the Bible. A rephaim is the invisible yet a permanent part of a physical human body that continues to exist on earth after the human body decomposes and returns to the elements from which it came. The rephaim is the record of the human body that will be used when the body is resurrected to a physical existence.

SPIRIT AND PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS OF EXISTENCE

The Bible shows that spirit-beings and

spirit-substance can exist in this physical dimension (See Gen. chps.18;19 Numb. chps.22; Job 1:6-12; Lk. chps.24; Rev.12:7-9). However, the scriptures also show that physical beings cannot exist in the spirit dimension (See Jn.3:3-5; 8:13-23; 13:33-36; 1.Cor.15:50). Therefore, it makes sense that the spirit element of the human creation returns to God at death (Psa.31:5; Ecc.12:7; Lk.23:46), and the physical element of the human creation remains on earth at death (Gen.3:19; Job 34:15; Ecc.3:19-20).

Because God designed the human life-form with both spirit and physical elements, both of these elements will be used to reconstruct the individual at the time of their resurrection.

THE DEAD SHALL RISE FIRST

In the apostle Paul's writings to the Thessalonians, he speaks of the first general resurrection of the dead at which time the elect of God will be given immortality at Christ's coming:

Paul said:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which sleep [are dead], that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep [are dead] in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep [are dead]. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead shall rise first" (1.Thes.4:13-16 KJV).

These scriptures are very important, because Paul says that the dead shall be raised and it is obvious that Paul understood that the dead remained on earth awaiting their resurrection. See 1.Sam.2:6; Psa.49:14-15; Jn.3:13; Acts 2:29-34; Heb.11.

Logic should tell us that, because the spirit record of the elect returns to the Sovereign Father, when Paul speaks of the dead rising from the earth, he

must be referring to a physical record, of a human that will rise from the earth where it resides in sheol awaiting the resurrection.

THE RESURRECTION OF ISRAEL

Another key to understanding the rephaim is found in Ezekiel, chapter 37. This chapter contains the prophecy of the valley of dry bones, which are Israelites who have died throughout the ages.

This prophecy clearly shows that these Israelites will not be given a spirit body like those who participate in the first resurrection, But they will be brought back to a physical life as human beings after Christ returns in order to give them an opportunity for salvation under the New Covenant with national Israel.

The prophet Ezekiel says the following about the bones of these Israelites:

"And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he to me, Prophecy to the wind, prophesy son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (vs.8-10 KJV).

There are similarities between this resurrection and the creation of Adam and Eve. God made Adam's body from the elements of the earth; then, he took a bone from Adam's body and made Eve. In this resurrection, God takes the bones (an allegory of the dead Israelites) to use as the foundational form with which to reconstruct each individual Israelite. Adam, Eve, and these resurrected Israelites are constructed from the elements of the earth. And like Adam, these Israelites have no life force until air is placed into their lungs and they begin to breath.

In order for these reconstructed bodies to function as sentient beings, the spirit of man must be put back into the body, because the body without the spirit of

man is lifeless: At death, the body dies and becomes useless to the spirit of man that inhabited it.

THE RECORDS OF THE DEAD

The Sovereign Father has not only promised to resurrect all of the Israelites who have ever lived and died without an opportunity for salvation but also he has promised to resurrect the rest of humanity who have not had this opportunity. In order to accomplish this task, he has a record of each person's intellect (their mind). And this record is stored in heaven.

The Sovereign Father has made provisions for a record to be kept of each individual that has ever existed. Humanly, we can understand that everything in the physical universe operates under a system of law, which control and sustain the physical creation. The physical record of man does not exist in some mysterious magical non physical dimension of time and space; it exists as a physical thing, which was created as a part of the human being and exists under the specific laws that regulate its physical existence.

The rephaim or the record of a dead human body, which occupies sheol, is not spirit or human, does not have conscious thought, and is not animated or alive. However, it is real and made of physical substance that occupies physical time and space within this dimension of existence.

Because of the abundance of the allegorical and factual references about sheol and the rephaim that occupy it, the rephaim must be the physical record and pattern of each human body.

Logic tells us that because this record or pattern is invisible yet physical, it must be composed of pure physical energy in one form or another. This invisible yet physical element is the physical record or pattern that God will use to reconstruct each individual's unique physical body at the proper time in his plan for the salvation of humanity.

The physical body of a person decays and returns to its basic elements, while the physical element, which is the pattern or record of the individual,

remains intact and is stored on earth.

The rephaim, which is the record/pattern of the physical human form, remains on earth because it is a part of this physical dimension of time and space and cannot enter the spirit realm.

SUMMARY

The dead are simply dead. Some of the dead will be resurrected to eternal life and immortality, some will be resurrected to physical life, and some will be resurrected to the punishment of eternal death in the lake of fire.

Few Have Known God's Truth

From the time of Adam to the time of the return of Christ, relatively few individuals will have had the opportunity to understand God's truth. Most who hear the Gospel preached hear it only as a witness or as a warning, because spiritual truth and knowledge cannot be conveyed by natural means to a mortal human mind. See Jn.16:13; 1.Cor.2:10-15.

Spiritual truth is conveyed through the Father's holy spirit to those called to a spiritual work. This is why the vast majority of people do not even begin to grasp the awesome truth of God.

Regardless of their quality of life, education, or intelligence, most of humanity has been kept in total ignorance of the true gospel and the way to salvation. God has either purposely not allowed them to understand his truth (Mk.4:10-12; 2.Cor.4:3-4) or they have been deceived by satanic religions (2.Cor.11:10-15; Rev.12:9).

Is God Fair?

Jesus said that we must keep God's commandments in order to live forever (Matt.19:16-17). But, how can people keep his law if they have never had it taught to them? The obvious answer is that they cannot! Logic tells us that a person must know what to do before they can do it. Therefore, because God is fair and just, each person must be given the opportunity to understand his law and way of life and they must be given enough time to act upon

this knowledge. The God of love (1.Jn.4:16) will not condemn billions of people to eternal death (Rom.6:23) without first giving them the opportunity to know what they must do in order to gain eternal life.

Not the Only Day of Salvation

Believe it or not the Bible shows that the time between Adam and the return of Christ is not the only time when salvation is offered to humanity. The problem with the belief that today is the only day of salvation, is that, this belief is not comparable with what the Bible says that the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles taught about the Sovereign God's plan to offer the opportunity of salvation to all of mankind. A small amount of study into the scriptures will show that today is only a day of salvation for a specific group of individuals who are being called to an extraordinary opportunity before Christ returns to conquer and govern the earth.

Most of professing Christianity believe that there are only two categories of people on earth: the saved who are assured heavenly bliss and the lost who are to be tormented forever in an everlasting hell-fire. Is today the only day of salvation? Have God the Father and Jesus Christ been trying to save all of humanity from the time of Adam to this present day? The biblical answer to both questions, is absolutely not.

There is a great contradiction between what people believe and what the Bible actually says about this topic. Moreover, personal research and study into this topic will help bring a deeper understanding of the tremendous opportunity God is offering humanity.

I see that my time is up, if you want to know more about what the Bible actually says about the state of the dead or the other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, Write to me at the at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org.

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