

LIFE AFTER DEATH!

Is the idea of Life after Death taught in the Bible? If so, where is it located? If not, where did it originate? Let's examine the issue of *Life After Death*.

The word death means the end of life (a permanent cessation of all vital functions (including the thought processes)).

Beginning in [Genesis 2:7](#), we read "God formed man of the dust of the ground." Not only was man's beginning from the dust, but his ending as well. The dead are called, "them which are asleep," in [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#); and in [Daniel 12:2](#) it says that the dead sleep "in the dust of the earth."

Turning to [Ecclesiastes 12:7](#), Solomon tells us what happens to a person at death, "the dust shall return to the earth ... and the spirit shall return unto God." David says in [Psalm 146:4](#), "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." This spirit that returns to God is spoken of in [James 2:26](#) and [Job 27:3](#) respectively as, "the body without the spirit is dead"; "the spirit of God is in my nostrils." The breath and the spirit are one and the same thing.

Going back to [Genesis 2:7](#), the soul is defined. "God formed man of the dust ... and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man become a living soul." The body (dust) plus the breath (spirit) equals a living soul.

Do souls die? Turning to [Ezekiel 18:20](#) we read, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." [Romans 3:23](#) says that, "All have sinned." Therefore all shall die.

We know that the breath (i. e. the spirit) returns to God. But can the dead person know anything? "The dead know not anything" – [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#). In [Psalm 115:17](#) it states, "the dead praise not the Lord." There are some who claim that we can communicate with the dead. Yet, the Bible says that the dead can't praise the Lord, "for in death there is no remembrance of thee" – [Psalm 6:5](#). The wisest man that ever lived says, "there is no work, nor device (intelligence or reason), nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" – [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#). Solomon concludes by saying, "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" – [Ecclesiastes 3:20](#).

Some say we go straight to heaven when we die. Let's read about the righteous man David in [Acts 2:34](#), "David is not yet ascended into the heavens." David was asleep. In [1 Kings 2:1, 2](#) we read, "Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged

Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man." *The way of all the earth* is just another way of saying that we are all mortal and will die. In [Psalm 17:15](#) David tells us, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." When will David awaken? He will awaken at the resurrection. Death is described as a sleep in [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#). Consider also the patriarch Job, who stated in [Job 14:14](#), "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." "We shall all be changed" – [1 Corinthians 15:52](#). Therefore the dead remain asleep until resurrected by Jesus (see [John 5:26-29](#).)

There is redemption from the grave. In [1 Corinthians 15:21-22](#) we read, "for since by man came death ... even so in Christ shall all be made alive." We can know who will be resurrected, and when they will be resurrected. [Acts 24:15](#) states, "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." In [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#) states, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the (righteous) dead in Christ shall rise first." While in [Revelation 20:4-5](#) we read, "And they (the righteous) lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

The cornerstone of Satan's kingdom has been the lie, "Ye shall not surely die" – [Genesis 3:4](#). This is what he told Eve in the Garden of Eden, and he has been telling mankind ever since. Satan works just as powerfully today through religious leaders, to deceive, by saying that the dead are alive and can communicate with the living.

God has told us that "the dead know not anything", and that they remain that way until Jesus descends from heaven to resurrect the righteous. What is really happening when some claim to see or hear their loved ones who are dead? [Revelation 16:14](#) states, "For they are the spirits of devils working miracles."

There is really only one way for us to avoid being deceived. We must study God's Word for ourselves. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." – [Acts 17:11](#). "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" – [Isaiah 8:20](#).

"Hell" is used in many references today. It is especially associated with thoughts of

death. The word "Hell" itself is of Anglo-Saxon origin. It simply meant a covered or hidden state, before its usage in the English translations of the Bible. For example, "helling" potatoes was the act of burying them in the ground for protection through winter. They still follow this custom of "helling" their potatoes in Great Britain today. "Helling" the house, or constructing a thatched roof, did not mean to set the house on fire.

In the Old Testament of the [King James Version](#), "hell" is translated from only one word. That word is "sheol". It appears in the Old Testament a total of sixty-five times. "Sheol" translates to "hell" thirty-one times; "grave" thirty-one times; and "pit" three times. Obviously this inconsistency of translation has added to the confusion that exists in many minds with respect to the condition of the dead.

The translators of the [King James Version](#) were not Catholics. Yet, they lived at a time when the papal-inspired doctrine of everlasting hell-fire and damnation was quite generally accepted, even in Protestant circles. Naturally this influenced their work to a large degree. The original meaning of the word "hell" that is, to conceal, or cover, was not much different from that of "grave", or "pit". Perhaps the translators took this into consideration and thus eased their consciences in using "hell" to translate "sheol". Also, they were well aware of the sinister meaning the word "hell" had erroneously received. They knew that by using it to translate "sheol", it would confirm the idea of torture that was already in the public mind.

DEATH NOT TORMENT: -

The translators found it impossible to always use the word "hell" as a translation of the Hebrew word "sheol". If they did so, it would have put some of the most faithful servants of God, mentioned in the Bible, in a place of torment. Therefore they switched back and forth from "hell" to "grave" as suited their purposes best.

For example, the righteous patriarch Jacob was the first to use the word "sheol" in the Old Testament. He supposed wild beasts killed his beloved son Joseph and was broken-hearted over his great loss. Mourning for Joseph he said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning" – [Genesis 37:35](#). In this text the translators have given us the word "grave", otherwise it would have revealed that Jacob believed Joseph was in "hell", and that he expected to go there himself when he died. The word "hell" given the papal meaning of torture, would

be too much for the average reader to accept.

The righteous man Job prayed to go to "sheol", but in translating this prayer the translators gave us the word "grave" – [See Job 14:13](#). Job had been going through much hardship and suffering. Then Job asked God to let him go to "sheol", where he knew he would be at rest – [See Job 3:11, 13, 17-19](#). If the translators gave us the word "hell" in this text, Bible readers would quickly see that the Biblical "hell" is not a place of torment, but a condition of unconsciousness. Readers would then know that Job did not ask to go to a place where his sufferings would be increased, and where they would last forever.

Another Old Testament prophet defines "sheol" for us in no uncertain words. Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device (intelligence or reason), nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." – [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#). What a wonderful revelation of truth this text is to us. No suffering, no pain and no knowledge of anything, once we go to the grave. Just a place of unconsciousness, where our loved ones are resting.

The point is that "sheol" is the only "hell" of the Old Testament. Throughout the generations before the time of Christ, "sheol" was the only "hell" the people of God knew. What kind of place was it? It was a place of quietness and rest, a condition of unconsciousness. The prophets of God taught them that both the righteous and the wicked would go to "sheol" when they die. They would wait the time when, by the power of the Creator, they would be restored to life in the resurrection.

HELL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: -

The facts concerning "hell" as they unfold in the New Testament are fully in harmony with what the Old Testament reveals. Greek is the original language of the New Testament. Here the Greek word "hades" agrees with the Hebrew word "sheol" of the Old Testament. We can know this from the fact that the Apostle Peter quoted a text with the word "sheol" in it from the Old Testament, and used the Greek word "hades" in his sermon delivered on the Day of Pentecost. The word "sheol" appears in the Old Testament text. Therefore, Peter translated "sheol" by the Greek word "hades".

The text Peter quoted in this sermon was that of [Psalm 16:10](#). It is a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus, declaring that Jesus' soul would not be left in "sheol". As already noted, this proves that Jesus went to the Old Testament "hell" when he died. It also proves, that

the Old Testament "hell", is the same as the New Testament "hell". In both these instances the translators gave us the word "hell". Here they faced a dilemma. If they used the word "grave" they would have put Jesus' soul in the grave. This, of course, would be quite correct, but would not harmonize with the other papal inspired doctrine concerning the immortality of the soul.

THE KEYS OF "HELL": -

We should be glad that Jesus did go into the Bible "hell" when he died. For by going into the Bible "hell" he provided redemption for those who are there now. In [Revelation 1:18](#) Jesus himself makes a very interesting statement saying, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore ... and have the keys of hell and of death." The use of the term "keys" by Jesus is his way of assuring us that he will unlock the great prison-house of death and set its captives free.

This, in turn, is quite in harmony with the last two uses of the word "hell" in the Bible, [Revelation 20:13, 14](#). Here the Revelator tells us that "hell" will give up its dead; and afterward be destroyed. The symbol used to describe the destruction of "hell", is that of a lake of fire. Many people suppose that the "lake of fire" is the Bible "hell", but not so. The Revelator tells us that it is the second death, and that in it, death and "hell", will be destroyed. Fire is one of the most destructive elements known, and the Lord employs it in his Word to picture destruction.

"Gehenna", another Greek word in the New Testament, is translated as "hell". This was a name of a deep ravine just outside the ancient city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem's inhabitants disposed of their garbage and the offal (refuse or waste parts of butchered animals) of the city in this ravine. Fires burned continually in "Gehenna" to effect the destruction of refuse thrown into the valley.

Jesus used "Gehenna" as a symbol of destruction, because of the circumstances associated with "Gehenna". Jesus knew that the people of his day would understand the importance of what he was saying to them. "Gehenna" was not a place of torture. Its use was exclusively for destructive purposes. In fact, the Jews could not, by Scriptural teaching, use torture of any kind, even of animals.

Jesus' use of "Gehenna" was for symbolizing destruction. He makes this clear from his statement to his disciples. He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." – [Matthew 10:28](#). The translators give us the word "hell" here as a translation of "Gehenna".

It is strange that sincere readers of the Bible have not noticed that it is a place of destruction, not of torment.

In another reference to "Gehenna", Jesus intensified the picture of destruction. He referred to the ever-present worms that infested dead carcasses. Jesus spoke of adverse attractions that might come into a Christian's life to draw him away from the Lord. He symbolized these highly prized things as hands and eyes, and said it would be better to cut off one's hand, and pluck out one's eye, than to be cast into "Gehenna" where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. – [Matthew 5:29, 30; 18:8,9](#).

THE RIGHTEOUS IN "HELL": -

As we have seen, fires burned continually in "Gehenna". The fire destroyed everything cast into this ravine. In the event that a carcass thrown into the ravine should not reach the fires but lodge on the jagged sides, worms would destroy these. Thus, by these powerful illustrations, Jesus confirmed the universal teaching of the Bible. Paul tells us this teaching in [Romans 6:23](#). "For the wages of sin is death", not torment.

In telling us that the wages of sin is death, the Apostle Paul also declares that the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." – [Romans 6:23](#). Through the blood of Christ, we can see the glorious hope of a resurrection from the dead for the righteous.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." - [Revelation 21:4](#).

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