



July 02, 2021

### **You Shall Not Surely Die**

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from my “mobile” office here in Mankato, Minnesota. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed. We’re currently still on a pastoral visit to several brethren in various states to the north, as well as visiting family. We’ll be headed to Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska next.

Several years ago I attended a memorial service for a family member. It was a Catholic service, and honestly one of the strangest ones I’ve attended. Over the years I’ve conducted a lot of funerals where we focus as part of the service *where* the deceased is after death.

I generally mention when it is a member of the body of Christ that “he or she was faithful to the end and now is resting in the unconscious state of death called ‘the grave’.” We have probably all attended funerals where the preacher claimed that the person who had just died “was now in heaven”. Yet my experience is that the people there at the funeral service are grieving the loss of the person and obviously recognize that the person is dead, and are conflicted. They reason and discuss that the person who died is actually alive by means of possessing an immortal soul that continues on living, has a conscious existence, and by means of this “soul” is in the third heaven in God's presence. Sincere as they are, many feel this idea is very shallow and are left without comfort. I’ve been told this many times by family members of the deceased.

Death is an enemy that brings pain. (1 Corinthians 15:26, 55) The pain from the death of a loved one is the acute awareness within those of us still here physically that will continue on in this life, that the person who has died is indeed no longer alive and can no longer interact with any of us. Some may try to console themselves with the notion that the loved one is still alive (but now in heaven), but that does not remove the stark reality of death.

We find that the Scriptures are clear about the status of the dead. "*For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks?*" (Psalm 6:5) This tells us that the person who has died is no longer able to communicate with their Creator.

Solomon writes about this subject and the condition and state of the dead. "*For the living know that they shall die; but the dead do not know anything, nor do they have any more a reward; for their memory is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no*

*work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.*" (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10)

How clear can one make it? When one dies, there is no active memory or brain functioning. The word translated "grave" here is the Hebrew word *Sheol*. It is the "Old Testament designation for the abode of the dead." (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon)

The Scriptures compare the state of the dead to a condition of sleep. Daniel speaks of this "At the time of the end . . ." (Daniel 11:40) "*At that time Michael shall stand up . . . And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life . . .*" (Daniel 12:1-2) They will awake from a sleep-like state of death where their dead bodies have been resting in the ground and have even returned to dust. "*All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.*" (Ecclesiastes 3:20)

God told Adam and Eve, "*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.*" (Genesis 3:19)

The apostle Paul equates the state of the dead with sleep. "*For we say this to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not go before those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16)

One should ask, where did this notion come from of the dead not really dying? It goes back to the influence of the Deceiver. "*And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die*" (Genesis 3:4) Satan tried to get the first humans to deny the fact that "*the wages of sin is death.*" He continued to palm off his lies to mankind as he was given sway to broadcast his message of deception. The "*god of this age has blinded*" human beings and he is described as "*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*" (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2) Multiple past civilizations and philosophers have adopted and propagated the notion of the "immortality of the soul". It continues to be the belief of many today.

Quoting from the World Book Millennium 2000 Encyclopedia: "Many of ancient Egypt's finest paintings and other works of art were produced for tombs and temples. Artists covered the walls of tombs with bright, imaginative scenes of daily life and pictorial guides to the afterlife. The tomb paintings were not simply decorations. They reflected the Egyptians' belief that the scenes could come to life in the next world. The tomb owners therefore had themselves pictured not only as young and attractive but also in highly pleasant settings that they wished to enjoy in the afterlife. . . The ancient Egyptians believed in a life after death, called the

afterlife. They had their favorite possessions and practical objects buried with them for later use in the afterlife."

The truth from the Bible is that humans are not immortal, and they do not have an immortal soul. They must be *given* immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53) Humans must be *given* eternal life. (Romans 6:23; John 17:2) The ancient patriarch Job knew that God would call or summon him from the grave.

*"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."* (Job 14:14) He would be awakened from the grave and changed from the state of unconsciousness and being dead and having turned to dust in the grave, to having newness of life with a spirit body. Job was not going to be conscious in the grave. God would bring him and many others back to life at the sound of the trumpet blast. Once he was resurrected by God's intervention, he knew then he would have a changed body and he would live again!

Friends, do we understand, believe, continue to study about, and hold on to these wonderful and comforting truths?

When we die, we await. We will be awakened from the sleep of death and be raised up with a spirit body that will not be subject to disease, pain or death...God's plan awesomely lays this all out clearly.

The Festival of Trumpets will be upon us in a few short weeks, where we'll focus on that resurrection as part of this Holy Day. I look forward to God's upcoming fall Feast Days, and I pray you do too!

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

**-Scott Hoefker**

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