

The state of the dead according to the Word of God

What does the Word of God say about the state of the dead? Has God taken them to heaven to live with Him? The Bible says the dead have no thoughts, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" Psalms 146:4 "but the dead know nothing...Their loves, their hates, their passions, all died with them.there is no action, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in the world of the dead—and that is where you are going" Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6,10, GNT.

When, in answer to his prayer, Hezekiah's life was prolonged fifteen years, the grateful king praised God with these words: "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. The father to the children shall make known thy truth." Isa. 38:18,19. Popular theology represents the righteous dead as in Heaven, entered into bliss, and praising God with an immortal tongue; but Hezekiah could see not such glorious prospect in death. With his words agrees the testimony of the psalmist: "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Ps. 6:5; 115:17.

It is only when Jesus comes again that the righteous dead will wake up and go to heaven, says the Bible "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 in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonian 4:16,17 see also 1 Corinthians 15: 52,53. This is very clear that the "dead shall rise" from their graves, they are not alive when Jesus comes again, otherwise they would come with Him from Heaven.

So where does the doctrine come from that when a person dies he or she goes to heaven immediately? It comes from Satan. In the garden of Eden, God had commanded our first parents, Adam and Eve that they may eat all the fruits in the garden, "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Genesis 3:3. But Satan told Eve that "Ye shall not surely die" Genesis 3:4. Unfortunately they believed Satan's lie instead of God's command, even though God had warned them about Satan who at this time had been expelled from heaven because of his transgression of God's law of love. And that is how sin entered into our world with Satan as its originator. For sin is defined in the Bible as "the transgression of the law" 1 John 3:4.

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” John 3:16. Instead of God destroying man because of his transgression of the law, He sent His Son to pay for the guilt of man so that through His death man may be restored to fellowship with God. And this act shows beyond doubt the immutability of the law. If God could have changed one of the precepts of His law to meet man in his fallen state, then there would have been no need for Christ to die.

The Son of God came from heaven to make manifest the Father and pay the ransom for fallen man. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. In describing His earthly mission, Jesus said, The Lord "hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives" Luke 4:18.

And so we can only be delivered from the bondage of Satan by Christ. This deliverance occurs when we accept Christ as our personal Savior and through His power confess and forsake our sins which nailed Him to the cross. When we do that Christ wipes away our past sins and imputes His righteousness upon us which gives us power to obey Him. For it is written, “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” John 1:12. It is only when we use the strength that Christ gives us to overcome sin and temptation that we can at last enter heaven, for His promise is, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Revelation 3:21

Immortality had been promised on condition of obedience to the requirements of God. It was forfeited by disobedience, and Adam became subject to death. He could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there would have been no hope for the fallen race, had not God, by the sacrifice of his Son, brought immortality within their reach. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23. In no other way can it be obtained. But every man may come in possession of this priceless blessing if he will comply with the conditions. All "who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality," will receive eternal life. Rom. 2:7.

According to the Bible the only people who were given a special resurrection or translation that are in heaven, who came from this earth are:- Enoch, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Genesis 5:24; Moses, “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said “The Lord rebuke thee”” Jude 1:9 NKJV; Elijah, “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” 2 Kings 2:11; and those that rose from the grave at the resurrection of Jesus to be presented as trophies before His Father in heaven, “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” Matthew 27:52,53.

Apart from these, there is no one as we have shown that goes to heaven immediately when they die. Jesus has not yet come again, the trumpet has not sounded and when He comes "all eyes shall see Him" Revelation 1:7. In other words, He will not come in secret.

Jesus says, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28,29. Again the scripture is clear, that the dead do not come from Heaven or a burning hell but rise from the graves. In the first resurrection or the resurrection of life they are only then given life by Jesus.

The second resurrection or the resurrection of damnation or the second death occurs 1000 years after the first. When talking about the wicked dead and their final judgement, the Bible says, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished...Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. 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 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 death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:5,6,7,10,12,14,15.

Amen.

Yours in Christ

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