

ABSENT FROM THE BODY AND
PRESENT WITH CHRIST (2Co 5:6-8)

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WHAT HAPPENS TO THE HUMAN "SPIRIT-SOUL" AFTER DEATH?

CONTENTS:

- a) The Make-up of the Human Individual
- b) The Hope Christ Has Brought into our Nature and Destiny
- c) Differentiating the Souls of Believers, Unbelievers and Animals
- d) Why is Death Called Sleep in Scriptures?
- e) Sadducees vs. Pharisees Controversy
- f) What Happens at Death Since the Time of The Cross

Only by the guidance of the revealed Scripture could we escape error about this mystery (Mat 22:29).

a) The Make-up of the Human Individual

According to the Scripture, all Humans on Earth, like Adam (who became a special Animate or Living Soul) made from earth and inspired from God (Gen 2:7), are moral, intelligent, divine-like SPIRIT-SOULS (inner man) animated in mortal, temporal, earthy FLESH-BODIES (outer man). The human body is also called SOULISH (Natural) BODY (1Co 15:44) because its animation depends on the operative power of the soul. The human body is flesh as is animal flesh, while the human soul is spirit (or breath) as with animal soul. Jesus said that flesh and spirit are distinct and different in origin and essence (Joh 3:6), even though they coexist as one individuality. SOULS (NEPHEESH or PSEUCHE) ARE BEINGS (or conscious selves) THAT HAVE CAPACITY TO MOVE, BREATHE AND FEEL; whether they are intelligent or not. Human Spirit-Souls can maintain consciousness either as bodiless spirits (Heb 12:23; Rev 6:9-11) or in animated bodies. The animating spirit-soul of the human body (Num 27:16; Job 12:10; Zec 12:1) is divinely inspired with intelligent thoughtful mind and conscientious moral heart (Job 32:8; Job 35:11; Job 38:36; Rom 2:15). Animals lacking the divinely inspired souls, operate only by neurologic instincts and reflexes (2Pet 2:12). The Human Spirit-Soul was the Divine image personally breathed (psyched) into humans by God Himself (Gen 1:26-27; Gen 2:7), while animal souls were generically brought forth at God's creative Word, lacking the personal Divine image (Gen 1:20-21; Gen 1:24).

Strictly speaking, the human spirit-soul (RUACH-NEPHEESH or PNEUMA-PSUCHE 1Sa 1:15; Job 27:2-3; Isa 26:8-9; Luk 1:46-47) comprises:

(1) the zoetically animating (CHAY or ZAO) soul (which God breathed or psyched "NAPHACH or PSUCHO" into Adam Gen 2:7) as the zoetic-life principle (CHAY or ZOE) similar to zoetic-life principle of animals by which physical vitality and physiology are sustained. This is distinct from:

(2) the spiritually and mentally illuminating (RUACH or PNEUMA) spirit as the rational, moral principle in the image and likeness of God by which reason, conscience and worship are inspired (Job 32:8; Act 17:26-27; Rom 12:1-2).

This means then that for us humans:

- (1) Our personal responsibility and identity lie in our spiritually ever-conscious souls but not in our physically mortal bodies (Eze 18:4; Luk 16:19-31).
 - (2) Our divine connection and operation lie in our divine-image spirit while
 - (3) Our physical connection and operation lie in our earthly mortal flesh.
- << BACK TO TOP >>

b) The Hope which Christ brought into human Nature and Destiny

In addition to their human spirit-soul, Christians are given the Holy Spirit Who awakens and renews their spirit to eternal life in union with Christ and witnesses assurance of this renewal to their spirit-soul (Rom 8:9-16; 1Cor 2:12; 2Cor 1:21-22; 2Cor 5:1-6).

(1) The spirit-souls of those in Christ, because of the quickening and the 'earnest-firstfruit' of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27; 2Co 5:5; Eph 1:13-14), will at death triumphantly "ascend or return" to God (Eccl 3:21; 12:7). God preserves the SPIRIT-SOULS of Christians (no longer in the sheol paradise bay of Abraham below Luk 16:22, but now) in the paradise bosom (or bay Acts 27:39) of His presence for rest and comfort with Christ, pending eventual glorious resurrection (i.e. bodily redemption Joh 5:28-29; Rev 6:9-11) after the tribulation, for the Millennial Reign of Restoration-Restitution with Christ (Act 1:6; 3:21). DEATH IN CHRIST or DEATH OF THE SAINTS is so precious to God (Psa 72:14; 116:15). This gracious individual transitional consignment (pass/cross over Joh 5:24) to the spirit supraworld (Paradise above) through angelic ministry (Luk 16:22) is unto Eager WAITING for the general tribunal (give account 2Cor 5:10) vindication of ADOPTION AND REDEMPTION (Rom 8:23).

(2) The spirit-souls of those without Christ, because of their divine image, though accursed because of sin, will at death disgracefully "ascend or return" to God (Eccl 3:21; 12:7). God detains them with chains of sorrow and pain in the lowest-dark pit or dungeon Psa 86:13; Psa 88:6; Psa 116:3; (i.e. tartarus or abyss Luk 8:31; 2Pet 2:4) for regrets and torment (Luk 16:22-31), pending eventual 'resurrection' of damnation (SECOND DEATH) after the Millennium (Joh 5:28-29; Rev 21:8). This regrettable individual transitional consignment (already guilty Joh 3:18) to the spirit underworld (Hell below) through demonic ministry (Jud 1:9) is unto Fearful WAITING for the general tribunal (give account 2Cor 5:10) condemnation of JUDGMENT AND INDIGNATION (Heb 10:27).

2Peter 2:3-5, 9

(3) And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation pronounced long ago is not sitting idly by; their destruction is not asleep.

(4) For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment,

(5) and if he did not spare the ancient world, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world,

.....

(9) — if so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their trials, and to reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment,

□ Before Christ came, both the lower torment PIT and upper comfort BAY of the netherworld were together "below" in SHEOL or HADES, but separated "afar off" by a "fixed" impassable CHASM. At death transition, Angels conveyed the saints to the comfort BAY and demons conveyed the sinful to the torment PIT (Luk 16:22-26).

- When Christ died, He went down and preached the Gospel of His Lordship in sheol-hades (1Pet 3:18-20).
- When Christ rose and ascended, He took the saints in Abraham's paradise bay, from the captivity of sheol-hades to bring them into the earnest liberty of His own paradise presence in "third" heaven (Mat 27:52-53; Luk 4:18-19; Joh 20:17; 2Cor 5:6-8; 12:2-4; Eph 4:8-10; Php 1:21-23).

The First Resurrection is for the Just and shall be glorious and rapturous but not secret (Mat 24:30; Rev 1:7). It shall not occur except AFTER the Antichrist rebellion (2Thes 2:1-3), when Christ returns openly in glory to destroy the Antichrist and terminate the great tribulation (Mat 24:21-31; Mark 14:62; 1Thes 4:13-18). At Christ's coming, the saints shall be glorified and raptured in the clouds to "meet" (i. e. "welcome" as in Mat 25:6; Act 28:15) Christ in the air as He comes down to destroy the Antichrist (2Thes 2:8) and reign with the glorified saints (NOT TO DEPART BACK WITH HIM TO HEAVEN, BUT TO WELCOME HIM DOWN TO EARTH). As Christ's priest-kings, the saints shall rule on earth (Rev 5:10) with rod of iron (Rev 2:26-27) in the Millennium (2Thes 1:5-10; Rev 20:6), when all kingdoms of this world shall be subdued under Christ's reign (1Cor 15:24-25; Rev 11:15; 12:10).

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<< BACK TO TOP >>

c) Differentiating the Souls of Believers, Unbelievers and Animals

The soul gives zoetic animation to the flesh through the nostril-breath and the blood-life in both humans and animals alike (Gen 7:21-23; Gen 9:3-6; Lev 17:11-16). Job spoke of the souls of all living beings and the spirits of all human persons (Job 12:10). Animals have only the non-accountable zoetic breath (NESHAMAH or PNOE); their impersonal breath-souls 'mundanely brought forth' (Gen 1:20-25) go DOWNWARD (i.e. without accountability and immortality Ecc 3:21) after death. Humans in addition to this ordinary breath capacity, also possess the accountable divine-image spirit (RUACH or PNEUMA) Job 33:4; Isa 42:5; their spirit-souls 'divinely in-breathed' (Gen 2:7) go back UPWARD (i.e. with accountability and immortality Ecc 3:21) to God after death (Job 34:14-15; Isa 42:5b; Ecc 3:19-21; Ecc 12:7; 2Co 5:6-8; Php 1:23).

(1). After bodily death, because animal brute breath-souls are AMORAL, they do not return to God to account, and they lack spiritual consciousness (neither of comfort nor of torment) nor do they wait for resurrection, since their bodies do not bear God's image.

(2). After bodily death (Mat 17:3-4; Luk 16:19-31; Rev 6:9-11; Rev 20:4-5), because human spirit-souls are MORAL, they return to God to account, and they retain spiritual consciousness (either of comfort or of torment) while they await the resurrection (either glorious or inglorious Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29). This conscious state of COMFORTABLE EXPERIENCE AND GLORIOUS EXPECTANCY for Christ's believers after-death is what Christ calls being in paradise with Christ (Luk 23:43; Rev 6:9-11), and St Paul calls being present with Christ after death (2Co 5:6-10; Php 1:23).

Our Lord Jesus Christ became the Animating or Livening Spirit from heaven (Joh 6:33-40; Joh 6:54-63; 1Co 15:45-49). As believers in Christ, we are destined to resurrect like Him, with incorruptible, immortal, heavenly SPIRITUAL BODIES for the Millennium Jubilee Kingdom

and the Eternal Bliss (Mat 19:28; Act 3:21; Rev 20). Unless resurrected or changed glorious IN CHRIST, mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit God's Kingdom (1Co 15:50-53).

<< BACK TO TOP >>

d) Why is Death Called Sleep in Scriptures?

Death is called sleep in Scriptures, because it involves reclining still with no physical activity and shall be followed by bodily waking at the resurrection. Sleep of death never means cessation of subconscious spiritual activity like spiritual seeing, speaking and sensing, as with Abraham and poor Lazarus and the rich man in sheol (Luk 16:19-31), as with Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration (Luk 9:30-33),

as with the dead Patriarchs whom Jesus and God regarded as "the living" (Mar 12:26-27; Luk 20:37-38),

as with Christ disembodied at death yet consciously preaching to the conscious disembodied spirits in hades (1Pet 3:18-20).

So also was it with the disembodied martyrs in heaven who are conscious till now (Rev 6:9-11).

Usually there is subconscious awareness in dreams during sleep; so it is during death. This consciousness of the disembodied spirit-soul of the saints, though present with the Lord in paradise, still hopes eagerly for the glorious re-embodying at the resurrection jubilee (Rom 8:19-23; 2Cor 5:1-10).

<< BACK TO TOP >>

e) Sadducees vs. Pharisees Controversy

Before Christ came, the ruling Jews (Sadducees Mat 22:23) believed that death was both the cessation of all vitality and consciousness as well as the termination of existence (Job 3:17-19; Psa 6:5; Psa 115:17-18), but the puritan Jews (Pharisees Act 23:6-8) contended that the Scriptures revealed that death was not the end but an intermediate sleep, because there were both comfort and hope of glorious resurrection for the pure-hearted (Job 19:25-28; Psa 16:7-11; Psa 23:4; Pro 14:32; Jonah 2:6). The Pharisees also believed there were torment and fear of shameful resurrection for the wicked (Dan 12:2). When Christ came, He chided the Sadducees for ignorance of both the Scripture and God's power (Mat 22:23-30), but He sided with the Pharisees on the consciousness of the dead and their subsequent resurrection. Christ gave the details of this truth in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luk 16:19-31) and in His argument of the "livingness" of the Patriarchs (Mar 12:26-27; Luk 20:37-38). Christ did not only ascertain this hope before He went to the cross (Joh 10:17-18) and while on the cross (Luk 23:43), but He also proved this truth at His transfiguration (Luk 9:30-33) and resurrection (Mat 28:1-10).

<< BACK TO TOP >>

f) What Happens at Death Since the Time of Christ's Cross and Ascension?

Before Christ's resurrection and ascension all spirit-souls of the dead were all sent down to Sheol-Hades below. After Christ's resurrection and ascension, whenever someone dies, the spirit-soul leaves the body for burial in the grave or other form of destruction and decay. The disembodied spirit-soul returns to God but remain subconsciously aware either of DIVINE FAVOUR in paradise of comfort (i.e. SHEOL'S Abraham-bay or bosom in the OT, but now at HEAVEN'S Altar-base in the NT) Luk 19:22a; 23:43; John 17:24; Phil 1:23; Rev 6:9-11; or of DIVINE DISFAVOUR in dungeon of torment (i.e. the OT shachath-sheol of gloomy captivity or

NT gehenna-hades of scorching torment) Job 3:17-20; Job 17:16; Ps 88:4-8; Luk 16:22b-23. This dreamlike awareness of comfort or torment continues till the comforted saints are first awakened by resurrection when Christ comes again to destroy the Antichrist, terminate the tribulation and establish His Millennium reign with His glorified saints (2Thes 1:6-10; 2Thes 2:1-8; Rev 20:4-6). Thereafter, the tormented infidels shall wake at the final judgment, only to be cast again into severest torment and ruin in the everlasting furnace (Rev 20:13-14; Rev 21:8). As for demons of extreme evil, they are presently imprisoned in the tartarus or abyss of darkness, pending the final judgement (2Pe 2:4; Jud 1:6). Even Satan shall be detained in this abyss during the Millennium before the final judgement (Rev 20:1-12).

Here is wisdom: that we hold unto and rejoice in the hope of the faithful to enter the sure honour of the believing and escape the sure horror of the unbelieving (Heb 10:26-27; Rev 14:9-16). Only by the guidance of the revealed Scripture could we escape error about these mysteries (Mat 22:29).

<< BACK TO TOP >>

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