

# THE TRUTH

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## Lesson 15 - The Truth About Death

The legend says it happened in the streets of Baghdad: A merchant sent his servant to the market, but soon he returned, trembling and greatly agitated, and said to his master, "Down in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd, and when I turned around I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture. Master, please lend me your horse, for I must hasten away to avoid her. I will ride to Samarra and there I will hide, and Death will not find me." The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant galloped away in a cloud of dust. A little later the merchant himself went to the marketplace and saw Death standing in the crowd. He said to her, "Why did you frighten my servant this morning? Why did you make a threatening gesture?" "That was not a threatening gesture," said Death. "It was only a state of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra!" [Destination Life, George E. Vandeman, 1]

1. What do most men have an appointment with someday? [Hebrews 9:27] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

This is only a legend, yet it reminds us that every person has an appointment with death, an appointment that looms before us like a brick wall.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT DEATH

2. Who only, has immortality? [1 Timothy 6:15, 16] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: The word, "immortal," occurs only once in the Bible, and refers to God.

3. How does Scripture describe man's current state? [1 Corinthians 15:51-53] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

4. When do we get immortality? [1 Corinthians 15:51-56] Ans. At the \_\_\_\_\_ resurrection, which takes place at the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus.

NOTE: The word, "immortality," is used only five times in the Bible. You will find it in: 1 Timothy 6:15-16; Romans 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:10; and 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

As you think back over your life and recall with what frequency the word, "immortality," has been used at funerals and in religious conversation, is it not surprising to discover that this word is found but five times in the Bible? It never refers to man or any part of man's nature; but the clear, emphatic declaration is made that God, "only hath immortality." We do not have it naturally or inherently. We are to seek it, discover it in the gospel and receive it as a reality at the second coming of Christ. It is only through Christ that any sinner has hope of immortality.

### THE CREATION OF MAN

5. At creation, what two components were used to create man? [Genesis 2:7; Job 27:3] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

Then man became “a living soul.” Note carefully that God did not breathe into man a living soul or endow him with a living soul, but He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. An electric light bulb, of itself, gives no light. But when an electric current is sent through its wiring, light is produced. Thus Adam’s body, perfect as it was, could not perform any function or fulfill any purpose. So God switched on the current of life, and Adam then became a living, active, functioning soul. The living soul did not exist before Adam was made.

## THE REVERSAL

### 6. What two things happen when man dies?

- The body turns to \_\_\_\_\_ again. **[Genesis 3:19]**
- The \_\_\_\_\_ (breath of life) returns to God. **[Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20]**

When man dies, the simple opposite of the creative process takes place. Says the Bible, “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” **[Psalm 146:4]** The breath of the spirit of life of all men, good and bad, returns to God. God also takes back the breath of life from animals, as you have read. Solomon rejects the theory that man’s spirit goes upward and a beast’s spirit downward. **[Ecclesiastes 3:19-21]**

### 7. Is man conscious in death? Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

- The dead know not \_\_\_\_\_. **[Ecclesiastes 9:5]**
- The very moment he dies, his thoughts \_\_\_\_\_. **[Psalm 146:4]**
- The very moment he dies, his \_\_\_\_\_ perish. **[Ecclesiastes 9:5]**
- The very moment he dies, he ceases from \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord. **[Psalms 115:17]**

**NOTE:** The Scriptures are plain. When death comes, all thought and feelings end. If they do not, the Bible is false and unreliable. When the electric current is turned off, the bulb is there, but light is gone.

### 8. Can the dead communicate with the living? [Job 14:21; Ecclesiastes 9:6] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

Read Deuteronomy 18:9-12 carefully and prayerfully. The Bible states that any attempts to communicate with the dead are considered by God an “abomination.” According to Bible prophecy, spiritism is to have a great revival in these last days, but it is not of God. **[1 Timothy 4:1]**

### 9. What do the Scriptures compare death to? [Daniel 12:2; John 11:11-14] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** Death is a state of unconscious sleep. The dead rest quietly in their graves until Jesus comes. And when we stop to think it through, how could this be improved upon? As always, God has arranged what is best. Instead of permitting the departed one to look down from heaven and see the distress and grief his departing has caused; instead of allowing a departed husband or wife to see his spouse quickly transfer his love to another; instead of permitting parents to witness their children choosing a dishonorable course, Jesus has arranged death to be a short period of unconscious sleep. There is no hardship on the departed ones, for they are not conscious of passing time.

In death there is no consciousness of the passing of time. When David is resurrected, it will seem but the next instant after he died “the twinkling of an eye,” as it were. In the Bible, death is called “sleep,” *fifty-four* times.

**10. Do good people go to heaven when they die? [Acts 2:29; 34] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_**

**NOTE:** The body turns to dust again, and the spirit goes back to God, who gave it. The spirit of every person who dies whether righteous or wicked returns to God at death.

**11. Are they any human beings in heaven tonight?**

- \_\_\_\_\_: [Heb. 11:5; Gen. 5:24] • \_\_\_\_\_: [Deuteronomy 34:5, Jude 1:9]  
He was translated and never saw death. Died, buried and was later resurrected.
- \_\_\_\_\_: [2 Kings 2:11] • \_\_\_\_\_:  
He was translated and never saw death. [Matthew 27:51-53; Ephesians 4:8]  
Died, buried, resurrected Sunday morning and taken to heaven 40 days later.

### IT'S ORIGIN

**12. Who originated the doctrine of consciousness at death? [Gen. 2:17; 3, 4] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_**

God said, “Thou shalt surely die.” [Genesis 2:17] The devil said, “Ye shall not surely die.” [Genesis 3:4] The devil deceived Eve and nearly the entire world. Countless millions live in fear, dread, superstition, and under religious tyranny because of the devil’s lie and the multiplied horrible theories that have been built upon this original falsehood. The Egyptians believed in the immortality of the soul, and passed the doctrine onto the Greeks and Romans, who in turn gave it to Christian churches.

**13. Can Satan and his angels impersonate our dead relatives who are resting in the grave? [1 Samuel 28:3, 7, 11-13] Ans. \_\_\_\_\_**

“Satan has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness.” [Great Controversy, 552]

### APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS – [2 Peter 3:15-16]

However, there are some difficult passages in the Bible, which are “hard to be understood.” When there is apparent contradiction or seeming difference of meaning, two things should be kept in mind.

- i. First, difficult texts should be studied in the light of the general teaching of the Bible on that particular subject.
- ii. Second, all lines of Bible doctrine should run parallel.

### THE THIEF ON THE CROSS - [Luke 23:43]

**NOTE:** Jesus told the repentant thief, “Verily I say unto thee, *today* shalt thou be with Me in paradise,” did Jesus take the thief to heaven that day?

- i. First, Jesus did not Himself go to paradise that day. Jesus did not ascend to heaven until the day of His resurrection. **[John 20:17]**
- ii. Second, although Jesus died that day, the thief did not. **[John 19:30-33]** He was taken down from the cross just before sunset, while still alive, so he could be put back onto a cross after the hours of the Sabbath. Although the thief was taken down from the cross over the Sabbath, historians tell us that he would have been put back on it on the day after the Sabbath. This is because death by crucifixion usually took several days.
- iii. Third, there is no punctuation in the original. When Luke wrote those words, punctuation marks had not yet been invented.

So, in order to make the verse agree with the above Bible facts, the comma should be moved from before “today” to after “today”: “*Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with Me in paradise.*” It was on that day, the day of Christ’s worst humiliation that He could give the glorious promise that the thief would be saved and later be with Christ in heaven. What a promise is that for the rest of us. Notice that the thief did not ask to be taken to paradise then. He asked, “Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” That is exactly when he will be remembered and taken into that kingdom.

### THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

**NOTE:** Some believe that during the time between His crucifixion and His resurrection, Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison. Here is the unusual passage: **[1 Peter 3:18-20]**

- i. First, notice that Christ preached to them by, “the Spirit,” and that word is capitalized. So whatever preaching was done was accomplished through the Holy Spirit.
- ii. Second, this preaching was done while Noah was building the Ark, not long before the Flood covered the earth. **[Genesis 6]** “And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” **[Genesis 6:3]** In other words, God’s Spirit pleaded with men through the preaching of Noah.
- iii. Third, the preaching was done to “spirits which are in prison.” The words, “spirit” and “soul” are often used when talking about people. David prayed, “Bring my soul out of prison,” **[Psalm 142:7]** Paul spoke of being into captivity to sin. **[Romans 7]**

It was the work of Christ to open “the prison to them that are bound.” **[Isaiah 42:7]** In summary, Christ preached by the Holy Spirit, while Noah was building the Ark, and He did it to the “spirits in prison,” that is, to those individuals whose sinful lives were bound in the prison house of sin.

### CONCLUSION

**14. What two keys are possessed by Jesus? [Revelation 1:18] Ans.** \_\_\_\_\_ (hades) and \_\_\_\_\_

A correct knowledge of what happens when we die frees us from erroneous concepts of God and His justice, and protects us from the deceptions of spiritism. While the Bible reveals all that we need to know, let us never forget that life is still a mystery and will always remain so. It can never be fully explained or understood. The same is true of death. But thank God, we can know that Jesus paid our death penalty. He died my death on Calvary, **[Hebrews 2:9]** and has abolished my greatest enemy – death. **[2 Timothy 1:10]**