

The State of the Dead

By Pastor J. Mark Martin

Here are some clear New Testament statements concerning the state of the dead:

1. A PERSON IS MADE UP OF THREE PARTS – SPIRIT, SOUL & BODY:

1 Thessalonians 5:23

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is a difference between a person's breath and spirit:

Isaiah 42:5

"Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk in it."

Job 7:11

"Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

2. A PERSON'S SOUL AND SPIRIT ARE MORE THAN BREATH, THEY HAVE EMOTIONS:

1 Samuel 18:1

"Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself."

2 Samuel 5:8

"And David said on that day, 'Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul, through the water tunnel.' Therefore they say, the blind or the lame shall not come into the house."

Job 14:20-22

"You forever overpower him and he departs; You change his appearance and send him away. His sons achieve honor, but he does not know it; Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it. But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself."

Mark 14:34

"And He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.'"

Psalms 107:26

"They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; Their soul melted away in their misery."

Luke 2:35

"...and a sword will pierce even your own soul- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

3. A PERSON'S SPIRIT IS WHAT IS REGENERATED

John 3:6,7

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

4. GOD WORKS THROUGH A PERSON'S SPIRIT

Proverbs 20:27

"The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being."

5. A PERSON'S SPIRIT HAS:

INTELLIGENCE - 1 Corinthians 2:11

"For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."

EMOTIONS - John 11:33

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled."

6. THE SOUL AND THE SPIRIT ARE SEPARATED FROM THE BODY AT DEATH:

Luke 8:54,55

"He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Child, arise!' And her spirit returned, and she rose immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat."

Matthew 10:28

"And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell."

James 2:26

"For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

1 Kings 17:21,22

"Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the Lord, and said, 'O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's life return to him.' And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived."

The term "death" which is "thanatas" in Greek, does not mean to be non-existent or unconscious, it rather means to be separated.

Colossians 2:13

"And when you were dead (separated from God -- NOT "unconscious") in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions..."

Romans 7:4,10,13

"Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God... and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;... Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful."

1 Timothy 5:6

"But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while

she lives."

Revelation 3:1

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this: I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Ephesians 2:1,5

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins... even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)... "

7. THERE IS A DESTINATION AFTER DEATH:

Philippians 1:21-24

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I don't know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

"Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- for we walk by faith, not by sight-- we are of good courage, I say... and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

8. THE SOUL IS CONSCIOUS AFTER DEATH:

Revelation 6:9-11

"And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also."

Obviously, a person's soul is more than his breath. These souls under the altar are not "breaths" that are robed and

crying out to God!

Note that these souls are conscious after death. They were martyred and after death are very much alive in heaven. They have the ability to cry out to God and to wear white robes. God Himself tells them that more of their brethren will join them after they are killed.

These souls are seen again in **Revelation 20:4**

"And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

More Scriptures Indicating the Consciousness of the Soul After Death:

Job 26:5,6

"The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants. Naked is Sheol before Him and Abaddon has no covering."

Matthew 22:31,32 – Abraham is alive after death

"But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Jesus' point is that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive right now.

See Luke 16:19-31 - The Rich Man and Lazarus – this is not a parable, but a story that really happened. Every time Jesus uses a parable it is introduced to us as a parable. One must ask the question: "If Jesus believed and taught soul-sleep, why would he use a story like this which has both main characters alive and conscious AFTER death?"

1 Thessalonians 5:10

"...who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him." (NT always refers to physical death as being asleep).

2 Corinthians 5:8

"...we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent

from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

Philippians 1:23

"But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better..."

This is Consistent with the Old Testament Witness:

Read Israel's taunt to the King of Babylon. It indicates an Old Testament understanding of consciousness after death:

Isaiah 14:9-11; 15-17

"Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. They will all respond and say to you, 'Even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us. Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering.' Vss.15-17: "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities who did not allow his prisoners to go home?'"

9. WHEN THE SOUL LEAVES THE BODY, THE BODY SLEEPS

The term "sleep" is never applied to the soul or the spirit, but only to a believer's body. The soul and the spirit continue to exist after death. The body "sleeps" and goes back to dust. The following verses refer to the state of the body at death as sleep:

Matthew 9:24

"He began to say, 'Depart; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.' And they were laughing at Him."

John 11:11

"This He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep.'"

Acts 7:59-60

"And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said,

'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord do not hold this sin against them!' And having said this, he fell asleep."

Acts 13:36

"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay."

1 Thessalonians 4:14

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

10. A BELIEVER'S BODY WILL BE RESURRECTED WHEN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST RETURNS:

1 Corinthians 15:50-53

"Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Believers who are with the Lord will come back with Him to receive new bodies at the resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Compare Revelation 6:9-11 with 2 Corinthians 5:1-4,8:

Revelation 6:9-11

"When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our

blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also."

2 Corinthians 5:1-4,8

"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life... we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

"But what about Ecclesiastes 9:5?"

"For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten."

The context of this verse is "under the sun." It is saying that the dead do not know anything that is going on "under the sun" vss.3,6 -- that is, on earth after they die and are in heaven (Eccl.12:7).

The Scriptures we've read clearly teach that the soul and the spirit are more than breath. A person's soul and spirit are separated from their body when they die. The soul is conscious in heaven after death awaiting the resurrection of the body.

Jesus' promise to Martha in **John 11:25-26** is also very clear:

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'"

A literal translation of the Greek text clarifies even more: "I am the resurrection and the life; the one believing in me even if he should die will live [or 'continue to go on living' --future active indicative tense, which speaks of continuous action], even if dies [the tense here, (2nd aorist subjunctive, 3rd class conditional), denotes the possibility of dying in a point of time, but it concedes something: it concedes that

even if he dies, he will continue to go on living]."

Clearly, Jesus is saying, "The one who believes in Me will continue to go on living even if he dies at a particular point of time." In other words, there is never a break in the life of a believer. A believer's life continues without any interruption by death.

The text continues in verse 26: "And everyone living and believing in me shall never, by no means (extremely emphatic in the Greek) dies unto the age..." (The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English, Zondervan, 1975, p. 307). Eternal life does not stop and start. It is a life of such a quality that it never dies!

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Grace Upon Grace
12612 N. Black Canyon Hwy.
Phoenix, AZ 85029
web: exAdventist.com