

SIGNS *of the Times*

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?

The First Lie Ever Told

“What happens when I die? What lies beyond? Heaven? Hell? Nothing?”

If we want the truth about death, it makes sense to listen to Someone who has experienced it—and who has come back to life to tell us about it. Jesus says, “I am He who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive.” (Revelation 1:18) Only Jesus can tell us what death is like and what we can expect when we die.

HOW DID JESUS REACT TO DEATH?

1. When His friend Lazarus died, what was Jesus’ reaction? (John 11:32-36)

The first thing to understand from Jesus about death is that He feels the same pain and grief we feel when a loved one dies. He stood at the grave of His friend—and cried!

2. What did Jesus do next? (John 11:41-44)

The second thing Jesus can tell us about death is that He has overcome it. Jesus can raise His people to life after death.

THE BIBLE’S FORMULA FOR LIFE AND DEATH

3. How does the Bible describe the process by which God created human life? (Genesis 2:7)

The process can be expressed as a formula—the Bible’s “Formula for Life”:

DUST OF THE GROUND + BREATH OF LIFE = A LIVING BEING

Humans are made up of a body (the dust of the ground) plus an animating element that comes from God (His breath of life). When these two things are combined, a living human being is the result.



4. What is the Bible's formula for death? (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**)
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Death reverses the "Formula for Life":

A LIVING BEING – BREATH OF LIFE = DUST OF THE GROUND (DEATH)

Some versions use the word "spirit" instead of "breath of life." For example, some Bible versions of Job 27:3 say, "the spirit of God is in my nostrils" (RSV, KJV), while others say, "the breath of God is in my nostrils" (NKJV, NIV).

5. Are the dead aware of anything going on in the world? (**Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10**)
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When we die, we rest unconscious in the grave until the resurrection. We have no thoughts or emotions. We have nothing to do with this earth anymore until the resurrection.

6. To what does Jesus compare death? (**John 11:11-14**) _____

When you go to sleep, you are unaware of what is going on around you until you wake up. Jesus says death is like being fast asleep until the resurrection.

7. Do human beings have an immortal soul that goes on living after death? (1 Timothy 6:15, 16)

We are not immortal, nor do we have an immortal soul. Ezekiel 18:4, 20, states that “the soul who sins shall die.” According to the Bible, we do not *have* a soul, immortal or otherwise. Instead, we *are* a soul. The Bible often uses the word “soul” interchangeably with “a living human being.” (Genesis 2:7; Acts 2:41; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:14)

8. According to the book of Job, what is the order of events when a person dies? (Job 14:12-14)

The Bible lets us know when all these things will happen. If we allow God to speak to us through His word we will not be confused or deceived during the days ahead. (Revelation 6:14; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 15:1; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55)

DOES A PERSON GO TO HEAVEN OR HELL IMMEDIATELY WHEN HE OR SHE DIES?

9. Didn't Jesus promise the thief on the cross that he would go to heaven that day? (Luke 23:39-43)

When we look more closely at what Jesus said, we find three problems with that conclusion:

- (a) The thief asked Jesus to remember him when “You come into Your kingdom.” (Luke 23:42) That doesn't happen until the second coming. (Luke 22:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 11:15)
- (b) Jesus Himself did not go to heaven that day. (John 20:17)
- (c) The thief didn't die that day. His legs were broken at sundown that day, because he was still alive. (John 19:30-34)

So how do we understand Jesus' words to the thief, "I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise"?

It's a matter of punctuation. The original Greek manuscripts contained no punctuation. If we move the comma slightly, the verse reads, "I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

Now the verse harmonizes completely with all the Bible's teachings about death. Jesus is saying to the thief, "I'm promising you right now—today—that you will be with me in Paradise." And He will fulfill that promise when He returns.

10. What was the first lie ever told? (**Genesis 3:4**)

In the Garden of Eden, God said, "If you eat from that tree, you are going die." But then the dragon came and whispered, "You will not SURELY die." He didn't want us to believe it. He didn't want us to understand how devastating sin really is. So he told us to doubt what God said. He told us the wages of sin isn't REALLY death - and the human race has been listening ever since.

COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS

After describing the glorious return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead in Christ, Paul writes, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:18) When we understand the truth about death, it truly is a comfort to know that our loved ones who have died in Jesus are peacefully sleeping in the grave until He calls them forth to live again—eternally.

MY DECISION

- I choose to follow Jesus and His truth, so that I may meet Him in joy and peace—whether I live to see Him come or whether I am raised from death to eternal life when He returns.

MY PRAYER

Father, I give my life to You. Thank You for Your great love for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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