

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" · John 3:16

STANDPOINTS · BY INGO SORKE, PHD



Death ... From Egyptian pyramids and supplies "for the journey across" to the Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang's underground Terra-cotta army of soldiers and local superstitions, humans have wrestled with the inevitable reality of death. *Death is humanity's one common denominator.*

As a little boy I was afraid to cross the cemetery - especially after dark! Later I learned that the dead are simply sleeping in the grave - until the Second Coming 👍, or the end of the Millennium 🙄. *God the Father understands our pain - He gave His only begotten Son to die on the Cross!*

The Bible, and the Bible only, determines truth - not tradition, experience, or opinion.

SOUL

📖 **BIBLE FACT: BODY + BREATH = SOUL . . . WE DON'T HAVE A SOUL - WE ARE A SOUL!**

Genesis 2:7: "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man **became a living soul**" (KJV; NKJV: "living **being**"). **Soul = Life = Whole Person** (1 Kgs 19:4; Ezek 32:10). "Eight souls (Gr. *psyche*) = people, were saved through water" (1 Pet 3:20; also Js 1:21). The Bible also uses *soul/psyche* as "mind", "inner being" (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 1:9; 3 Jn 2).

The soul is not immortal! "Immortal soul" never occurs in the Bible; only God is immortal (1 Tim 1:17). The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek 18:20) and can be destroyed (Mt 10:28). God: "You shall surely die" (Gen 2:17). Satan: "You will not surely die" (Gen 3:4) - *Satan is lying about dying, which leads to sin (Gen 3:6)!*

Greek philosophy - NOT THE BIBLE - teaches that we have a soul. Here is the origin of this myth:

- "When his soul went from his body he journeyed with a great company . . . He saw, by each opening of heaven and earth, the souls departing after judgement had been passed on them, while, by the other pair of openings, souls full of squalor and dust came up from the one in the earth, and from the second came down from heaven a second procession of souls clean and pure" (Plato, *Republic* 10.614-621).
- "Some think that the body (soma) is the grave (sāma) of the soul" (Plato, *Cratylus* 400b).
- "They are full of fear because the soul goes to God without the cover of the body" (Plato, *Cratylus* 403b).

DEATH

📖 **BIBLE FACT: DEATH IS A SLEEP, NOT A SEPARATION OF THE SOUL FROM THE BODY!**

- **The dead . . . are dead!** At death we don't go to heaven or hell: Stephen simply "fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). David is "dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" (Acts 2:29); **"David has not ascended to the heavens" (Acts 2:34)**. "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5). "The dead don't praise the Lord" (Ps 115:17). ***Don't believe a lie - you're dead when you die!***
- **The breath of life/spirit returns to God:** Job 33:4; Ps 146:4; Eccl 12:7; Lk 23:46. "The body without the spirit is dead" (Js 2:26). "You take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust" (Ps 104:29).

RESURRECTION

📖 **BIBLE FACT: OUR HOPE IS THE RESURRECTION, NOT DEATH!**

- **Jesus says:** "The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living" - because of the resurrection! (My 22:32; Mk 12:27; Lk 20:38). "*Cemetery*" simply means "a sleeping place" - think coma!
- **Paul confirms:** "He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:14).
- **We receive immortality at the last trumpet:** "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then will be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory" (1 Cor 15:51-55).

Joseph of Arimathea gave Jesus his tomb - Have you given Jesus yours?

Based on the Bible, the dead . . .

13 ... are asleep: "But I do not want you to be ignorant . . . concerning **those who are asleep**, unless you sorrow as others who don't have hope."

14 ... arise from the grave to Heaven: "For if [since!] we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him (Jesus) those who **sleep** in Jesus." *As Christ, so the Christian! From the grave up.*

15 ... arise at the Second Coming: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are **asleep**."

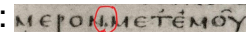
16 ... are in the grave, not in Heaven: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

17 ... join the Lord at the Second Coming, not at death: "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 will forever be with the Lord." *Irony: Satan is thought to be in charge of the air (Ephesians 2:2)!*

18 ... the truth about death is our real comfort: "Therefore comfort each another with these words." In contrast, the world offers no hope, no real comfort. Here the sad reality from the 2nd c. Oxyrhynchus papyrus: "Against such things [death] one can do nothing. Therefore comfort one another." *How sad!*

After a friend's death in a motor cycle accident, this text became the catalyst of my conversion. Later in life I got to present these Bible truths at a Baptist Seminary during my PhD studies - it caused a bit of an awakening! But when I read it with a family to plan a funeral, one lady exclaimed, "I don't like this text - it doesn't say what I believe!" (!)

BUT WHAT ABOUT . . .**THE BIBLE NEVER CONTRADICTS ITSELF AND IS CLEAR IN CONTEXT!**

- **the Thief on the Cross?!** "Assuredly, I say to you today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Lk 22:42, 43). Commas matter . . . "Let's eat, grandpa!" vs "Let's eat grandpa!" Or: "No, price too high!" vs "No price too high!"
- 4 Biblical Reasons** why Luke actually said, "**I say to you today**, you will be with Me in Paradise!"
 - 1. Luke didn't use commas;** translators did (Greek manuscripts like Papyrus P75 Bodmer XIV-XV show no commas; first commas 9th century). Vaticanus & ms 339 (13th c.):  - mark after today!
 - 2. Jesus didn't go to Heaven on Good Friday - neither did the thief:** Jesus told Mary, "Don't touch me, for I have not ascended to my Father yet!" (Jn 20:17). *The dead arise at the Second Coming (1 Thess 4:13-18).*
 - 3. Luke's grammar:** typical word sequence - Verb (say) + Adverb (today). Examples: Lk 2:11; 5:26; 12:28; 13:32, 33; 22:34, 61; Acts 19:40; 20:26; 22:3; 24:21; 26:2, 29; 27:33. *Scripture explains Scripture!*
 - 4. Old Testament oaths** are formulated as "I say to you today, . . ." Examples: Deuteronomy 4:1, 26; 6:6; 7:11; 8:19; 11:26; 12:32; 28:13; 30:19; 32:46; also Acts 20:26; 26:2). *Look up these texts and see!*
- **The Rich Man and Lazarus** - "There was a certain rich man" introduces a (common) parable (Lk 14:16; 15:11; 16:1), in which not all points are literal - else we'd have a live body in death without a resurrection! Jesus 1) points to Scripture *twice*: "Moses & the prophets" (verses 29, 31), 2) and the resurrection (verse 31). *Note: Jesus told the real Lazarus to "come forth!" (John 11:43), NOT to "come down!"*
- **Saul and the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:5-23)** - Satan is a master at impersonation and deceit. Saul saw an *elohim*, a false god, not Samuel. ***We are NOT to contact the dead (Lev 20:27; Deut 18:10)!***
 - ⚠ *Near Death Experiences are a dangerous deception; they are not biblically credible or reliable* ⚠
- **John 11:26 "Whoever believes shall never die"** = the second death (Rev 2:11; 21:8).
- **2 Corinthians 5:8 - absent from the body = present with the Lord?** *Context!* v1: "destroyed" - "eternal in the heavens" · v2 wish: "earnestly desiring" - "from heaven" · v4 "that mortality may be swallowed up by life" - 1 Cor 15:51 "at the last trumpet" - resurrection - 53 "put on immortality" - 54 then "Death is swallowed up in victory"! Col 2:5 "absent in the flesh" is not an out-of-body experience.
- **Philippians 1:21-23 - "To me to die is gain"** because ***Death → Unconscious Sleep → Resurrection!*** "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection . . . if, by all means, I might attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11)!"
- **1 Peter 3:19-20 - "Christ preached to the spirits in prison"** who were disobedient in the days of Noah."
- **1 Peter 4:6 - "the gospel was also preached to those who are dead"** - yes, who are NOW dead.
- **Revelation 6:9 - the souls under the altar** is symbolic language (like Abel's blood in Gen 4:10).

Death's curse won't last forever: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; **there will be no more death**, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). ***Are YOU ready?!***