



 **3ABN** BIBLE STUDY GUIDES
Looking Higher

DELIVERED FROM DEATH



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In our lives, we may wipe away tears at a graveside or hold the hand of a loved one who closes their eyes in death. Even years later, we taste the sadness again while remembering their smile or looking at old photographs. It is no secret that life is fragile. For many people, what happens after death is a mystery that brings fear and unanswered questions. But have we been left to face death alone? Are the moments and relationships of our lives meaningless, wiped away by the stroke of death? Does life have a purpose that extends beyond the grave? Many Christians and people of other faiths believe we continue in another form after death. But what does God's Word say about what happens when we die?

1 Why do we see and experience death in the world God created?

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

People die because humanity is tainted by the curse of sin. “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23), and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Because death is the result of sin, if we find a cure for sin, we also find the cure for death.

2 Why does God allow people He loves to experience death?

Genesis 3:22, 24 “Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.’ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

The life God gave was intended to last forever in a loving relationship with Him. By eating from the tree of life, Adam and Eve acknowledged their dependence on God for the life He gave them. In God's original plan for us, death is unnatural, foreign, and out of place (Ezekiel 18:31–32). By giving free choice to love or reject Him, God gave permission for each one of us to choose between life or death. The choice of sin results in death, and in His mercy, God does not allow us to live forever with the suffering caused by sin. Instead, He allows us a period of time during which we can “choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19). That time is the life God has given us.

3 Can man live forever on his own?

Job 4:17 “Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?”

God alone is immortal (1 Timothy 6:16). Man is mortal (1 Corinthians 15:53). We depend upon God for life. Human life is compared to “a vapor” (James 4:14), “a breath” (Psalm 78:39), and “a shadow” (Job 8:9) which exists for a short while, then passes away and does not continue on its own. “... So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits” (James 1:11).

4 What illustration does the Bible use to describe our state in death?

Psalm 13:3 “... enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

Daniel 12:2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

God's Word describes death as a sleep over 50 times. Speaking to Moses of his coming death, God said: "you will rest with your fathers" (Deuteronomy 31:16), using the Hebrew word for sleep. When King David died, and each of the kings after him, the Bible says that he "rested with his fathers" (1 Kings 2:10). While all will not rest in the grave for the same period of time, death is temporary. All will be raised to receive the result of what they have chosen during their lives.

5 What did Jesus teach about death?

John 11:11-14 "... He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.' However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'"

Jesus emphasized what was already written in Scripture, so we can understand that death is compared to sleep. He then raised Lazarus from the dead to prove that only He could awaken us from death and restore our life.

6 What thoughts do the dead have?

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished"

In death there is no consciousness, awareness, thinking, feeling, or planning. When we lay down to sleep at night, time passes and we are unaware of its passing. So it is in death. There is no awareness of the passing of time. All who sleep in death are not awake in another realm. Isaiah's prediction from God to King Hezekiah was "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live." (2 Kings 20:1). Death does not initiate a new kind of life.

7 What activities do those who have died engage in?

Ecclesiastes 9:10 "... there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

Psalm 146:4 "His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish."

Those who have died do not engage in any form of activity. "The dead do not praise the Lord" (Psalm 115:17), either in Heaven or on Earth. They are "silent in the grave" (Psalm 31:17), completely inactive. Because people do not pass over to another form of life when they die, there is no reason to fear the dead nor ask for their help or wisdom.

8 What does the Bible mean when it speaks of a spirit and a soul?

Genesis 2:7 (KJV) "And 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."

God formed the body from "the dust of the ground," but the body was not a *living person*. It was just dirt. Only when God gave the "breath of life" did the man become "a living soul." A soul is a living person. I do not *have* a soul, or *receive* a soul; I *am* a soul. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). The souls who believed in Jesus and were baptized were *living, breathing people*.

On the other hand, the spirit is the breath of life, which comes only from God: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils" (Job 27:3, KJV). Each of us who breathes the air God gives is kept alive by God's breath of life. Even animals receive the breath of life from God (Genesis 7:21-22). The spirit is not a separate entity that exists apart from the body. A person is a unified, indivisible whole, not composed of independent parts that are temporarily connected. "... may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

9 Is a soul immortal, or can it die?

Ezekiel 18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die."

A soul is a living person, and a person is mortal. The Hebrew word for soul, *nephesh*, and the Greek word for soul, *psuché*, are used over 800 times in the Bible and are often translated as "life" or "person." Not once



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“Consider the analogy of a light bulb ...”

are the words for soul paired with “immortal” or “eternal.” The curse of sin when Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil was, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). The consequence for every soul who breaks God’s Law has not changed: “... every one shall die for his own iniquity ...” (Jeremiah 31:30).

10 How does death reverse God’s gift of life?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

Psalms 104:29 “... you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.”

When a person takes their final breath, the breath of life (spirit) returns to God who gave it, and the person is no longer a living being. As Jesus was dying on the Cross, He demonstrated this when He said, “... ‘Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last” (Luke 23:46).

Consider the analogy of a light bulb which has a body (the bulb and filament). When electricity is connected to the bulb, light is produced; but when the electricity is disconnected, the light ceases. The light does not go to another place. It just isn’t. So it is in death. When the breath of life (spirit) is combined with the body, there is a living person (soul). When the breath is removed, life ceases. It does not continue as a separate entity in another place. It just isn’t. “... The body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26). The curse of sin, which God gave to the family of Adam, was, “for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). Without God’s breath of life, the body returns to the dust of the earth and decays.

11 What happened to God’s holy people who died in the Bible?

Acts 2:29, 34 “... the patriarch David ... is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. For David did not ascend into the heavens ...”

King David is an example of what happens at death. He is not praising God in Heaven, because “in the grave who will give You thanks?” (Psalm 6:5). When Jesus raised Lazarus to life, He did not call Him down out of Heaven; He said, “‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out ...” (John 11:43–44). When Job spoke of his death, he did not expect to see God immediately, but “at last,” when Jesus returns: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25–26).

12 Are there saints currently alive in Heaven?

Ephesians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus ...”

Each of us are “called to be saints” (Romans 1:7) while we are living. The word “saint” is translated from the word meaning “holy.” The Bible says, “as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15). A saint is someone who is following Jesus in a life of holiness. Even saints of God, like the prophet Daniel, rest in the grave, awaiting the return of Jesus. “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days” (Daniel 12:13).

13 What event will awaken the righteous who have died and are resting in the grave?

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the

“... in the grave who will give You thanks?” Psalm 6:5



Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

The “dead in Christ” who accepted Jesus’ righteousness will be raised to life when He returns. At that time, Jesus will “bring with Him” to Heaven those who have died to “always be with the Lord”—forever. They will receive eternal life *together with the living*—not before, and not later. This will be the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). The apostle Paul longed for the fulfillment of this promise, but he did not expect to receive eternal life at the time of His death. He waited to receive the reward along with us, “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

14 What change will happen to both the righteous living and the righteous dead when Jesus returns?

1 Corinthians 15:51–54 “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”



“The ‘dead in Christ’ who accepted Jesus’ righteousness will be raised to life when He returns.”

“... He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”
2 Timothy 1:12



What a wonderful promise! Whether they have died while trusting in Jesus or are alive trusting in Him when He returns, God will restore them to physical perfection and clothe their mortal lives with His immortality. “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness” (Psalm 17:15).

15 What is the only way to receive eternal life?

John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

John 10:10 “... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

John 11:25 “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.’”

1 John 5:11–12 “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

We can have assurance through Jesus that we will receive eternal life, even though we may sleep in the grave. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Before he died, Paul had a firm confidence that He would be with Jesus when He returns: “... I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

16 Many believe that the dead continue living in another form without interruption. Where did this belief come from?

Genesis 3:4 “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’”

This non-biblical belief, accepted by many in the world, came from “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). Satan is the father of lies, and “there is no

truth in him” (John 8:44). The enemy of God’s people uses this lie to overthrow the gospel by deceiving people to believe that:

- They are in the place of God, having in themselves what belongs to God alone—immortality (1 Timothy 6:16).
- They will live forever whether they submit to God’s Law or not. “... But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17).
- They do not need to accept Jesus’ invitation to “come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:40).
- Jesus’ death on the Cross could not end sin, because both the righteous and the sinner would live on forever.

17 If I enjoy the thought of my loved ones being with God in Heaven, does it matter what I believe about death?

1 Thessalonians 4:13 “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep ...”

Psalms 43:3 “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me ...”

Psalms 51:6 “Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.”

Proverbs 12:17 “He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit.”

John 8:32 “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

2 Timothy 4:3–4 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

All of God’s truth is for our blessing and safety. When Jesus faced Satan in the wilderness of temptation, He responded using the truths written in God’s Word (Matthew 4:1–10). Satan does not present the truth. He works “with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). Satan can work miraculous signs that imitate God’s power (Exodus 7:12, 22), even appearing to be a loyal angel of God (2 Corinthians 11:14).

By this deceptive power, the deceiver can appear in the physical likeness of someone who has died, sharing secrets only they could know. Having gained the confidence that he brings wisdom from God in Heaven, Satan and his demons then share lies about God’s Law, cloaking them in beautiful words, affectionate feelings, and half-truths. The enemy’s impersonations will be so convincing and real that even if we claim to believe in God, we will be deceived unless we trust in the truth of God’s Word rather than what we see, hear, or touch (Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

Because the dead have no thought or action, spiritualism, channeling, spirit mediums, reincarnation, apparitions, and occult practices all open the door to believe messages that come neither from the dead, nor from God, but from demons. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). God gave us a safeguard against this kind of deception when He said, “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:31).

18 How should the Bible’s teaching about death change the way we look at living?

1 Timothy 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called ...”

God’s gift of eternal life is a promise that will be fulfilled in the future (1 John 2:25). Each day is given to us so that we will accept that gift. Our decisions today determine whether we will live forever with Jesus when He comes. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

“By this deceptive power, the deceiver can appear in the physical likeness of someone who has died, sharing secrets only they could know.”



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY?



1. We receive eternal life from Jesus, because we choose Him in this lifetime. How can you love and obey Jesus with your whole heart today so that you can face death confidently whenever it may come?

2. How can you prepare yourself to use God's Word to recognize wrong beliefs about death, and resist them?

3. Subtle lies and confusion about life and death are hidden in plain sight—in books, movies, cartoons, television shows, songs, and commercials. What commitment can you make to put into your mind only what is true (see Philippians 4:8)?

4. How could you share the promises of God's Word to comfort someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one?

5. Who do you know that needs to hear what you have learned? “As cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country” (Proverbs 25:25).

Additional Notes:

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN DEATH?



1. There is a cure for sin, which means there is a cure for death. “So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die’” (2 Samuel 12:13).

2. We do not need to fear death. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death ...” (Hosea 13:14). “‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (1 Corinthians 15:55). “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces ...” (Isaiah 25:8).

3. Jesus’ resurrection is our assurance that God will raise to life those who put their faith in their Savior. “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power” (1 Corinthians 6:14).

4. God knows our human frailty, and He has mercy on us. “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. ... But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him ...” (Psalm 103:14, 17).

5. Jesus does not leave us to bear grief and sorrow alone. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ...” (Isaiah 53:4).

6. God’s Word gives real comfort to those who have lost a loved one. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3).

7. God cares personally about each person who died trusting in Jesus. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15).

8. The dead are not witnessing the pain and suffering of those they loved on Earth. Each one’s identity is remembered perfectly by God while they await the day He will restore them in the resurrection. “‘... I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands ...’” (Isaiah 49:15–16).

LESSON SUMMARY

1. Only God is immortal. Man receives life from God and is subject to death, which results from sin.

2. Each living person is a soul—a body with the breath of life, which comes from God.

3. God has made each person a unified whole, not distinct entities, which can exist separate from the body.

4. The Bible describes death as a sleep, a temporary state of waiting in the grave.

5. Those who sleep in death have neither consciousness, nor the power to think, communicate, or act.

6. God has closed the door against listening to demonic spirits by forbidding any attempt to communicate with the dead.

7. The dead in Christ will rise in the resurrection when Jesus returns. They will receive eternal life, together with the righteous who are alive at that time.

Additional Notes:
