

Grave Sleep

Does the body or soul or both *sleep* in the grave?

Often in the Bible the dead are not referred to as being *dead* but asleep or sleeping. This is because *everyone* will one day experience a resurrection. The body that is decayed in the grave will come alive. Saints will arise with a new body like unto the Son of God (I John 3:2). Sinners will be resurrected from the grave to stand before God in judgment. The sinner does not have the promise of a new body as does the saint.

Let us look at some reference verses in the Bible which use the term sleep or asleep for the term death:

II Samuel 7:12 *“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt **sleep** with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.”* God gave this word to Nathan to speak to King David of the day he would die.

Job 3:11-13

11 *“Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? 12 Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? 13 For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have **slept**: then had I been at rest.”*

Psalms 13:3 *“Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I **sleep** the **sleep** of death”* The Psalmist is speaking of getting old and tired and in need of God lightening his eyes lest he pass into death.

Acts 13:36 *“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on **sleep**, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:”* David was like unto all who go to the grave. He died and his dead body decayed.

John 11:11-14

11 *“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus **sleepeth**; but I go, that I may awake him out of **sleep**.* 12 *Then said his disciples, Lord, if he **sleep**, he shall do well.* 13 *Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in **sleep**.* 14 *Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”* This is perhaps the most commonly known passage in the Bible which speaks of death as sleep. Jesus Himself classified Lazarus as being asleep though he was dead.

Stephen was stoned to death yet it is said he went to *sleep* in Acts 7:60 *“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”*

Thus, commonly in the Bible sleep refers to death, Jesus Himself speaking of death as sleep. Therefore the question arises “is the body simply asleep in the grave just as it is in bed, for example?” Ecclesiastes 12:7 clearly states *“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”* The dust spoken of in this verse is the body, for where did every body originate? Genesis 2:7 reads *“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.”* Every person’s body came from the dust of the earth. Solomon wrote to us in this verse in Ecclesiastes that dust returns to earth (dust), that is, every body decays back to the dust from whence it came.

Job, like Solomon, spoke of his body going to dust. Job 10:9 *“Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?”* Job 34:15 *“All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.”* Ecclesiastes 3:20 reads *“All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”*

So, the body asleep in death in the grave is not breathing, is not conscious, is not moving, and does not have knowledge. In other words, be not deceived, the grave is not a safe-haven where you can have intercession made for your lost soul after you die. Tell your

family to spend that money for some worthy cause rather than waste it. You can communicate with no one from the grave.

If the body is dead, though referred to as asleep in some places in the Bible, where is the soul and spirit of a dead person? Look back once again to Ecclesiastes 12:7 which says *“Then shall the dust (body) return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”* (word in parenthesis added). This verse says the spirit of man returns to God. It is said of the saint in II Corinthians 5:8 *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”* Jesus cried from the cross of Calvary to His Father in Luke 23:46 *“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”* **The true definition of death is when the spirit of a person departs the person’s body.**

Then, the Word of God is clear there is no “soul sleep.” Just as the body is not sleeping in the grave neither is the soul. At death the soul is in heaven or hell. Not in a holding tank called purgatory, but in heaven or in hell. Jesus said to the thief on the cross who received Him in Luke 23:43 *“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* Yes, the thief’s body went into a grave as did the Lord’s, but his soul into paradise with His Lord. Luke 16 tells us the rich man died and in hell lift up his eyes.

Why is it the Bible might call death sleep? The answer is found in the Word in Daniel 12:2 which reads *“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”* Every body, saved and unsaved, is scheduled for resurrection.

Let us first consider the dead saint, referred to as “sleeping” in I Thessalonians 4:14 which reads *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep** in Jesus will God bring with him.”* Their body will awaken as stated in I Thessalonians 4:16 *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”* The saint dead in the grave will arise

with a new body. So, in a sense they have been “asleep” since death took them from us, and now they are awakened.

The sinner shall resurrect also. Daniel 12:2 *“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”* Revelation 20:5-6 tells us *“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* The dead body of the wicked shall live again to stand before God in judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment.