

No "Soul Sleep"

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One of the false doctrines several cults espouse is "soul sleep." This teaching says that when a person dies, the person's soul doesn't immediately go to heaven or hell, but "sleeps" in the grave awaiting the resurrection. The Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way, and the Seventh-Day Adventists are among those who hold to this doctrine.

There is not a single verse in the Bible that uses the term "soul sleep." However, several verses in the Bible compare death for the Christian to sleep. In Acts 7:59-60 when Stephen was stoned to death, it says he "fell asleep." But in the preceding verse when he was dying he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" How could he "fall asleep" and be in the grave if Jesus had received his spirit?

The answer is found in understanding the three parts of man. Second Corinthians 4:16 tells us there is an inner man and an outer man. The outer man is the body, while the inner man is composed of soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23, Heb. 4:12). Death occurs when the inner man is separated from the outer man (James 2:26). At death the soul and spirit goes immediately to heaven or hell while the body "sleeps" until the resurrection. It isn't the soul that sleeps at death, but the body that goes to sleep. Listed below are some verses that disprove "soul sleep."

Phil. 1:21-24--"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain...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."

Paul says when he dies it is gain, that he departs, and that he is with Christ which is very much better. If Paul believed in "soul sleep," then he should have wished that he could live for over a hundred years on earth so he could keep ministering. But the benefit of dying is to be immediately with Christ, which is "very much better" than remaining on earth. He couldn't have said this if he believed in "soul sleep." Paul also used the word "departure" (the departing of his spirit to heaven) in 2 Tim. 4:6, referring to his death.

2 Cor. 5:6,8-9--"...while at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

Paul is again speaking of his inner man leaving his body at death to be with the Lord. He also said he preferred to be absent from his body so he could be with Jesus. Notice he said we could only be "at home or absent," not in an in-between state like soul sleep.

Matt. 22:31-32--"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'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Jesus revealed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not dead, but living. Their bodies had died, but their souls and spirits were alive awaiting the resurrection of their bodies.

Luke 23:43--When Jesus was dying on the cross He said to the thief, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in paradise."

The Jehovah's Witnesses cult moves to comma to make it read, "Truly I say to you today, you shall be with me in Paradise." They change the Bible to fit their "soul sleep" theology. The phrase "Truly (Verily) I say unto you" is recorded over 70 times in the gospels, but not once "Truly I say unto you today." The thief knew that Jesus was talking to him that day, what he needed to know was when he would be with Him in paradise.

Which makes more sense? "Johnny, I am telling you the truth today, I am taking you to the zoo" or "Johnny, I am telling you the truth, today I am taking you to the zoo." Johnny needs to know what day he is going to the zoo, not what day you are talking to him. The meaning is without question: Jesus said he would be with Him in paradise that day.

Matt. 17:3-4--Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses had been dead for a long time (Dt. 34:5) and Elijah was caught up alive to heaven. Moses wasn't soul-sleeping.

<p>Luke 16:19-31--The rich man and Lazarus. When the poor man Lazarus died he was "carried away by the angels" to Abraham's bosom (paradise). When the rich man died he went to Hades (hell) and was in torment. He was able to carry on a conversation with Abraham, who was on the other side of the chasm (v.26).</p> <p>Abraham, who <u>lived before</u> Moses and the Prophets, told the rich man that his five brothers had "Moses and the Prophets" so the rich man and Lazarus <u>lived after</u> these books had been written. This clearly proves consciousness beyond the grave of people who lived during different times on earth. Those who believe in soul-sleep try to dismiss this verse saying it is "just a parable." Even if it were a "just a parable" (which it isn't), Jesus always taught parables to illustrate truth. These verses are clear: No soul-sleep.</p>
<p>James 2:26--"...the body <u>without the spirit</u> is dead..."</p>
<p>Heb. 9:27--"It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment." It doesn't say that soul-sleep is in between.</p>
<p>Acts 5:54-60--As Stephen was dying, he prayed for Jesus to receive his spirit. Jesus was in heaven (vv.55-56).</p>
<p>1 Thess. 4:13-18--"...even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus...and the dead in Christ will rise first..." When Jesus returns at the Rapture, He will bring <u>with Him</u> the spirits of those Christians who have already died and <u>their bodies</u> will be resurrected.</p>
<p>2 Peter 2:4-9--"...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to <u>keep the unrighteous under punishment</u> for the day of judgment." The unrighteous are being punished in hell right now.</p>
<p>Jude 4-13--Just as some of the fallen angels are now under eternal punishment, so the wicked are suffering the same punishment (v.7).</p>
<p>Heb. 12:22-23--These verses tell us who is inhabiting heaven right now. Included are "the general assembly and the church of the firstborn" (New Testament saints) and "the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Old Testament saints).</p>
<p>Rev. 6:9-11--This occurs in heaven: The <u>souls of those who have been slain</u> ask God to judge <u>those on earth</u> who have killed them. Verse 11 informs them that there are <u>more on earth that will die</u>.</p>
<p>Rev. 20:4--John <u>sees the souls of those who had died</u> and they received their resurrection bodies and reigned with Christ.</p>
<p>Matt. 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." There is a difference between killing the body and killing the soul. The first is physical death; the second is spiritual death or the second death (Rev. 20:6, 12-15).</p>
<p>John 11:25-26--"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me <u>shall live even if he dies</u>, and everyone who lives and believes in Me <u>shall never die</u>." For the believer, we continue to live even though the body may die because our spirits will never die.</p>
<p>Luke 8:49-55--The girl had died and Jesus said, "She has not died, but is asleep." Her body fell asleep at death. When He brought her back to life, "her spirit returned" and she rose up (v.55).</p>
<p>Gen. 35:18--Rachel died and her soul departed.</p>
<p>Eccl. 9:5--"...but the dead do not know anything..." A dead body doesn't know anything. Solomon is speaking from earth's perspective, for life "under the sun" (9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13). Later in the book he explains what happens at death, "the dust will return to the earth as it was (body), and <u>the spirit will return to God who gave it</u>" (Eccl. 12:7).</p>
<p>Psalms 146:3-4--In speaking of death: <u>his spirit departs</u>, he (body) returns to the earth.</p>