

What is death?

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Just as a heads up, this Bible study is an edited excerpt from my (much longer) Bible study titled: *“What the Bible really says about heaven, hell, judgement, death, evil, sin, and salvation”* (and I’d highly recommend reading that one all the way through from beginning to end if you’re able to, in order to get the full picture of what the Bible is talking about when it comes to salvation; but for those who don’t have the time to read that one right now, please do read this Bible study carefully).

Before beginning, I should point out that I already explained in the aforementioned longer Bible study why humans can’t suffer in the “hell” that the lake of fire will be located in, because no humans will be conscious in it (so please read that study if you aren’t already familiar with the scriptural reason for this, or read my shorter studies titled *“Immortality and the second death”* and *“What the Hinnom?”* instead if you prefer, since I also covered the details of why in them), but if we’re “eternal” beings, as most Christians assume, we must still be able to suffer in another version of “hell,” which the unsaved will experience as ghosts after they die, right? This is what most Christians believe, anyway. And because of this, while *“ye shall not surely die”* might be the first recorded lie the devil told,¹ it’s now being taught as truth by many people in the Christian religion who are trying to convince us that death isn’t actually death at all, but is instead actually life (“eternal life,” even), and that it’s really a friend bringing us to finally be with the Lord rather than an enemy that needs to be destroyed,² at least if we’re saved, or so they’ll tell us.

Based on all the sermons where I’ve heard preachers say things like, “When your heart stops beating, you won’t actually die; instead, you’ll pass on to the next stage of your life, the place where you’ll spend the rest of eternity, and the

¹ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: — Genesis 3:4

² The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:26

location you'll end up in from that point onward depends on whether or not you choose to accept Christ before you pass on to that final destination," it's clear they've forgotten that nobody remains dead, since there's still a resurrection of the dead in the future, prior to the Great White Throne Judgement.³ But in addition to this, it also demonstrates that they're unaware of the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as "the Old Testament") tell us the dead know nothing,⁴ meaning they aren't conscious at all⁵ (many Christians will do all sorts of

³ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. — Revelation 20:1-15

⁴ For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. — Ecclesiastes 9:5

⁵ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. — Ecclesiastes 9:10

theological and mental gymnastics trying to prove that these assertions made in Ecclesiastes don't literally mean what they say, but there had been no passages in Scripture prior to those which said the dead *are* conscious, so there's no basis for the idea that anyone who read these statements at the time they were written could have possibly understood that the writer instead meant the dead actually *do* have knowledge — although, for those who believe in the immortality of the soul, if Solomon *was* trying to get across to us that the dead *don't* have knowledge, I'd like you to tell me what he would have needed to have written differently there in order to convince you he actually *did* mean that they indeed don't have knowledge). Even in the Greek Scriptures (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as “the New Testament”), death is compared to sleep,⁶ not to being awake in an afterlife existence (outside of one very misunderstood story in the book of Luke, which I'll discuss shortly). The book of Acts didn't say Stephen died and went to heaven,⁷ for example. While his spirit was returned to God — not as a conscious being, though, because our spirit is just the breath of life that generates a conscious soul while in a body⁸ and isn't conscious itself, since it's actually our soul that is our consciousness, and spirits and souls aren't the same thing⁹ — the book of Acts says that he himself went to sleep, not that he remained awake.

⁶ 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. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. — John 11:11-14

⁷ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 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. — Acts 7:59-60

⁸ 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. — Genesis 2:7

⁹ For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. — Hebrews 4:12

Scripture also says that David and others fell asleep¹⁰ — referring to their actual persons being asleep or unconscious in death — not that just their bodies decayed while they themselves remained conscious (when Scripture speaks of a person dying, it doesn't just say their body died while they themselves continued to live; instead, it says that they themselves have died, and that the location of their very person is now “in the grave”¹¹ or “in the dust,”¹² in the very same place that everyone ends up,¹³ including all animals as well,¹⁴ in fact, and there's no scriptural basis for reading these verses in any other way, at least not that I'm aware of). Similarly, bodily resurrection is likewise compared

¹⁰ 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: — Acts 13:36

¹¹ Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. — John 5:28-29

¹² Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. — Isaiah 26:19

¹³ For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. — Ecclesiastes 9:1-5

¹⁴ For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. — Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

to waking up from sleep in Scripture,¹⁵ and not to a person being returned to their body to continue to be awake as they supposedly still were while they slept as well.

It's important to remember that consciousness, at least for biological beings such as humans, can cease to exist, since one can be rendered unconscious, either by going to sleep, by fainting, or by being knocked out (and when someone is unconscious, they are no longer conscious, meaning they are no longer aware of themselves and their surroundings, which means their consciousness has temporarily ceased to exist, which is something I can't believe I have to explain, but somehow many people I've discussed this with seem to miss this fact, so here we are), and if we can lose our consciousness under those common circumstances, with it ceasing to exist while we're alive (which means we aren't in a never-ending state of consciousness), there's no reason to believe our consciousness could return after we die without a living and active brain to bring it back into existence the way our brains do when we awaken from unconsciousness, thus regaining consciousness. To make this really clear, let's say that somebody was sleeping, and hence had no consciousness existing at that point (and before someone brings up REM sleep and dreaming, the subconscious processes of a physical brain that cause us to dream while asleep aren't the same thing as the consciousness we have while we're awake, nor is there any reason to believe the neurological processes that generate dreams can occur without a living, biological brain; and one doesn't dream the whole time they're asleep anyway — in fact, we only dream about 20% of the time we're asleep at night, so for approximately one third of our lives we aren't conscious at all), or was even knocked unconscious with a hard object. If they were to suddenly die right then while unconscious (and this

¹⁵ 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. — Daniel 12:2

hypothetical person is not in a state of REM sleep, and hence isn't dreaming in this scenario, just to remove any doubt), would their consciousness just pop back into existence at the point of their death? There's absolutely no reason to think it would, and the idea that death can recreate a consciousness that had stopped existing (as would be the case if this happened) really makes no sense at all.

But getting back to Scripture, it's also important to remember that the first time those in the body of Christ are said to meet the Lord is going to be in the air¹⁶ in our newly quickened — meaning immortal — bodies (while living members of the Israel of God will do so at the Second Coming, and dead members of the Israel of God¹⁷ will do so at the resurrection of the just,¹⁸ 75 days after the Tribulation ends — and please compare the numbers in Daniel 12:11–13¹⁹ to the numbers in Revelation 13:5²⁰ if you aren't familiar with the 75 day difference between the Second Coming and the resurrection of the just, because this is an important difference which proves that the quickening of the body of Christ takes place prior to the Second Coming, or at least prior to the resurrection of the just), which is the point from when we're said to finally *“ever be with the Lord”* (and not from a previous point such as our physical death, which would be

¹⁶ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:17

¹⁷ As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. — Psalm 17:15

¹⁸ And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. — Luke 14:14

¹⁹ And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. — Daniel 12:11-13

²⁰ And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. — Revelation 13:5

when those in the body of Christ *actually* began to “*ever be with the Lord*” if the immortality of the soul were true). In fact, the blessed hope²¹ we’re told to comfort one another with²² isn’t that the dead get to live happily with the Lord as ghosts in another dimension called heaven, but is rather the expectation that the dead in Christ will eventually be resurrected, and that all of us in the body of Christ (both those still living and those newly resurrected) will then be quickened/made immortal and caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air,²³ which is when we’ll finally be in the heavens. (And the reference to “*them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*” in verse 14 is just talking about the spirits of the dead members of the body of Christ that had “returned to God”²⁴ now coming back to rejoin their bodies, and isn’t meant to imply that they were already enjoying being “*ever with the Lord*” in heaven, since our spirits aren’t actually conscious; it’s our souls that are our consciousness, generated by a brain in a body which is being kept alive by our spirit, and our soul can’t exist so long as our spirit is not residing within our physical body, keeping our brain alive.) It’s important to remember that the reason Paul even brought this up to begin with was to comfort those who had lost loved ones to death. If the immortality of the soul were true, he would have

²¹ Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; — Titus 2:12-13

²² Wherefore comfort one another with these words. — 1 Thessalonians 4:18

²³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. — 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

²⁴ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:7

instead needed to have written something more along the lines of, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus are with Him now, enjoying the bliss of heaven, which is where you’ll go to ever be with the Lord when you sleep as well. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Of course, Paul also makes it quite clear that the immortality of the soul can’t be true when he wrote, *“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,”* in 1 Corinthians 15:16-19, as well as when he talked about all the dangers he faced while evangelizing,²⁵ and pointed out that there would be no reason for him to do so if there were no resurrection from the dead, because if there was no resurrection then nobody could be saved, in which case he might as well just go live life without worrying about evangelizing. This wouldn’t be true if those who are saved go to another dimension called heaven when they die. The fact that we don’t is why he could make that claim: because without the physical resurrection we would have absolutely no hope at all, since we would cease to exist for good (we wouldn’t even have the hope of continuing on as ghosts in another dimension called “heaven” with God, since those who died in Christ would have “perished,” meaning they’re no longer existing at all, and have no hope of ever existing again either, according to this passage), which was basically the entire reason Paul wrote that chapter in his first epistle to the Corinthians to begin with.

²⁵ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. — 1 Corinthians 15:31-32

In addition, we know that not only has David himself not gone to heaven, at least not as of the time Peter made that speech recorded in the book of Acts²⁶ (which was after Christ's resurrection and ascension, which means we also have no reason to believe he's ended up there since then), but that nobody other than Christ Himself had either as of the time John wrote that assertion in his commentary in the book of John,²⁷ which was also after Jesus ascended into heaven (Jesus' "red letters" quote should really end at verse 12 based on the fact that verse 13 says the Son of man was in heaven at that point, which we know Jesus wasn't at the time He had that discussion with Nicodemus, so everything from verse 13 to 21 presumably had to have been John's personal commentary on the topic, written after Jesus had left the earth; it's important to remember that the book of John was a theology book rather than a history book and, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, used historical quotes of Jesus to prove theological points instead of primarily being a historical record in and of itself the way the three Synoptic Gospels were, and that John often added his own commentary to the book, even though this commentary would have indeed been inspired by God), so it seems pretty obvious that life in heaven is only for those who have been resurrected and/or made immortal, and isn't for those who are currently dead.

²⁶ Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. — Acts 2:29-35

²⁷ And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. — John 3:13

In fact, if people were to remain conscious after death, God would cease to be their God while they waited for their physical resurrection, since He is not a God of the dead, but of the living,²⁸ which would make things strange for people in the supposed afterlife if they no longer had a God (although, if the immortality of the soul were true, that would be a good explanation as to why the dead²⁹ do not praise God,³⁰ or even remember that He exists,³¹ since He'd no longer be their God while they were still dead). Strangely enough, though, some Christians actually try to use this statement to support their view that the dead remain conscious, mistakenly thinking that Jesus' statement meant the dead aren't actually dead, but are actually still alive. If they just took the time to examine the context of the whole passage in Luke 20:27-38,³² however, they'd discover that it was really about how the Sadducees, who didn't believe in a physical resurrection in the future, were trying to trip Jesus

²⁸ For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. — Luke 20:38

²⁹ The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. — Psalm 115:17

³⁰ Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. — Isaiah 38:17-19

³¹ For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? — Psalm 6:5

³² Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. — Luke 20:27-38

up with a question about who a hypothetical person would be married to after being resurrected from the dead during the impending kingdom in the next “world” (referring to the next age, when the kingdom of heaven exists in Israel for 1,000 years, as explained in that longer Bible study, as well as in my shorter *“Things that differ”* study; the word “world,” at least in the KJV, doesn’t always mean “planet” or “earth,” but in many cases — including this one, since it was translated from the Greek αἰών/“ahee-ohn” — is a synonym for “eon” or “age,” meaning “a long period of time with a definite end,” which is why many Bible versions rendered it as “age” rather than “world,” although it can sometimes also refer figuratively to the zeitgeist — meaning the specific “spirit” — of a particular age³³) here on earth. They weren’t asking about a ghost in an afterlife dimension and whether or not she’d have to be polygamous in that imaginary realm, but were asking their question about her various marriages in order to make the idea of resurrection seem ridiculous. However, Jesus corrected them by not only pointing out that those who are resurrected from the dead at the beginning of that “world”/age will be immortal like the angels and hence will not be married anymore at that time (because procreation, which was normally done by married people in Israel, isn’t something immortal beings are meant to do, as we know from Genesis 6 — look up the Nephilim if you aren’t familiar with what I’m referring to, because that’s too big of a tangent for me to explain at this point), but also by using the fact that the Lord could not legitimately claim the title of *“the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,”* as Moses revealed Him to be, if the dead weren’t going to be physically resurrected someday, because He’s technically not the God of those who are currently dead, but is rather actually only the God of the living (Jesus was using prolepsis in that statement — prolepsis being a figure of speech meaning “the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently

³³ Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: — Galatians 1:4

existing or accomplished,” calling what is not yet as though it already were, in other words, as God Himself often does in Scripture³⁴ — in order to prove that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will definitely be resurrected someday, because otherwise that statement about them³⁵ would have been a lie since it would mean they’ll never exist again, when in fact *“all live unto him”* already, considering the fact that, as far as God is concerned, they’ve already been physically resurrected, at least from His timeless perspective).

The passage just can’t be read as saying they were actually still alive at that time. Verse 37 of Luke 20 (“...*that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush...*”) makes it very clear that Jesus is talking about the fact that these three patriarchs would eventually be physically resurrected, not that they’re actually still alive in another dimension (He didn’t say, “that the dead are living in another dimension”; He said, “that the dead are *raised*,” referring to a future resurrection). Jesus’ whole point is that, if they aren’t going to be raised from the dead to live again, God could not be said to be their God, because He isn’t the God of the dead but of the living. If they were actually still alive in some afterlife dimension, God would have still been their God from a literal perspective rather than just a proleptic perspective at that time (and they could still thank and praise Him, contrary to what the book of Psalms says), but Jesus’ whole point was that, without a physical resurrection, He *couldn’t* be their God, since they’d be dead and would never exist again. Because

³⁴ Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. — Romans 4:16-17

³⁵ Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. — Exodus 3:6

they *will* be resurrected, however, God actually can be said to be their God, even if only from a proleptic perspective at present.

There's just no way to read verses 37 and 38 as meaning anything other than Jesus saying that those who have "gone to sleep" are indeed dead and unconscious until their resurrection, because the only way that Moses' statement about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could possibly be used as proof of the resurrection of the dead is *if* the three of them have ceased to live and consciously retain knowledge for the time being. If the three of them are actually still alive in an afterlife dimension somewhere, and if Jesus' statement about God being the God of the living rather than the God of the dead was actually Him trying to prove the idea that God is still their God because they're actually still alive somewhere, then the resurrection of the dead would be entirely unnecessary for God to be their God, and Jesus' argument couldn't possibly help prove a future resurrection at all, which means they have to no longer exist as conscious beings for now or else Jesus' entire argument proves nothing. (Of course, the parallel telling of this discussion in Matthew 22:31-32 makes it even more obvious, since Jesus is recorded in that book as saying, "*But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,*" making it even more clear that this statement about God not being the God of the dead, but of the living, is entirely about the resurrection; when Jesus said, "the living," He could only have been referring to living in a physical body in the future, as this particular rendition of the discussion makes clear.)

However, before moving on, if you still believe in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul after reading about Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees, I'd like you to explain how, exactly, Jesus' argument about God not

being the God of the dead, but rather of the living, could possibly still prove the resurrection if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually *are* still alive in an afterlife realm somewhere. Because, unless you can do so, this statement by Jesus seems to be definitive proof that the dead aren't actually conscious, which means that no other passage in Scripture one might believe teaches a conscious afterlife can possibly actually be intended to be interpreted that way unless one can first explain that.

And speaking of dead “Old Testament” saints, some people also try to use the appearance of Moses and Elias (also known as Elijah) on “the Mount of Transfiguration”³⁶ to try to argue that the dead are conscious. But aside from the fact that this would make Jesus guilty of the sin of necromancy if He was talking to the ghosts of these two dead men³⁷ (and Jesus never sinned, so it's clear that this couldn't have been what was happening there), we know that this was simply a vision to fulfill the prophecy³⁸ made immediately before this

³⁶ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. — Matthew 17:1-3

³⁷ When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. — Deuteronomy 18:9-12

³⁸ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. — 2 Peter 1:16-18

passage that they would “*see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*”³⁹ (meaning that they’d only be seeing, or perceiving, Him coming in His kingdom at that time, which is exactly what happened when they had that vision of Jesus in the glorified form He’ll exist in when the kingdom of heaven comes fully into fruition in Israel in the future), because Jesus outright said that it was simply a vision.⁴⁰

And before someone tries to use Saul’s visit to the witch of Endor to prove the immortality of the soul, whatever the witch saw (remember, Saul didn’t see anything here), she described it as “*gods ascending out of the earth*,”⁴¹ so this was far more likely to have been a spiritual being of some sort than actually being Samuel (although the way this sort of thing was performed back then, from what I’ve been led to understand, involved a witch looking into a pit and pretending to speak to the dead in the pit, so I suppose it’s possible that God temporarily resurrected Samuel from the dead in that pit, but that wouldn’t prove the immortality of the soul either since he wouldn’t have been dead while in that pit).

Those aren’t the only passages they misuse, though, to try to prove the immortality of the soul. For example, many like to also claim that Paul said, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” Aside from the fact that this isn’t actually what Paul said at all (his actual words in 2 Corinthians 5:8

³⁹ Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. — Matthew 16:28

⁴⁰ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. — Matthew 17:9

⁴¹ And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. — 1 Samuel 28:13-14

— at least as translated in the KJV — were, “*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*”), if you look at the context of what he said in the previous verses,⁴² and also remember that a physical resurrection in an immortal, glorified body is what Paul was, and the living members of the body of Christ currently are (or at least should be), looking forward to, you can see that he was figuratively comparing our current mortal bodies to earthly houses, and saying that he was looking forward to no longer being “at home” in his mortal body, but instead wanted to be at home in his glorified “*house not made with hands*.” When Paul talked about “houses” and “homes” in these verses, as well as when he referred to being clothed there, he was talking about physical bodies, with the “*house not made with hands*” being a reference to his future immortal body, not to him existing as a ghost in another dimension after he dies. And so, when he wrote that he was “*willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*,” he couldn’t possibly have been talking about hoping he’d die so he would be with Jesus, since he specifically wrote in verses 3 and 4 that he was *not* hoping for death *at all* (when he wrote that he wasn’t looking to be “*naked*” or “*unclothed*”), but rather that he was hoping to be given an immortal body, or to be “*clothed upon*” (“*with our house which is from heaven*,” as he explained in verse 2) so that “*mortality might be swallowed up of life*,” confirming that this whole passage is about mortal bodies vs immortal bodies rather than about existing as ghosts in an ethereal afterlife dimension, and that he simply meant he was looking forward to trading in his

⁴² For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. — 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

mortal body for his future immortal body, which won't happen until we're caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (at least for those of us in the body of Christ).

This is similar to the way they misuse Paul's quote that, *for him specifically at that particular time* (it's important to note that this verse isn't talking about believers in general, but was about Paul's unenviable circumstances at the time he wrote these words), "*to live is Christ, and to die is gain*,"⁴³ to try to prove that he believed his death would bring him immediately to be with Christ in heaven, once again ignoring the context of the verses before these words,⁴⁴ not to mention the verses after them as well,⁴⁵ and the context of the surrounding verses make it pretty obvious that the "gain" Paul was referring to there would be a gain to the furtherance of the message he was preaching while in bonds, which his martyrdom would surely accomplish (the idea that the "gain" referred to going to heaven as a ghost is reading one's presuppositions about the immortality of the soul into the passage). I'll admit, verses 22 and 23 in the KJV aren't the easiest for people today to understand (17th-century English isn't something modern people always find easy to grasp), and some people will assume that by, "*yet what I shall choose I wot not*," Paul meant he hadn't yet decided which option he was going to select, as if it was up to him. But whether he lived or died wasn't actually up to him at all — it was up to the Roman government (at

⁴³ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. — Philippians 1:21

⁴⁴ What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. — Philippians 1:18-20

⁴⁵ But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: — Philippians 1:22-23

least from a relative perspective, although it was ultimately up to God from an absolute perspective⁴⁶). Literally all Paul was saying there is that he wasn't going to let it be known whether he'd personally rather continue living as a prisoner in bonds, which seemed to be helping the word to be spread more boldly,⁴⁷ or whether he'd prefer to die and let his martyrdom help the cause even more than his state as a prisoner was doing, and that he was pretty much "stuck between a rock and a hard place" either way (which is basically all that "*in a strait betwixt two*" means in modern day colloquialism), since his only options at that point appeared to be equally undesirable for him as an individual, which is why he then went on to say that he'd prefer a third option over either of the seemingly available two options, which was "*having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,*" because if Christ were to come for His body while Paul was still alive, he wouldn't have to suffer through either of the two likely options, but would instead get to depart the earth without dying, to "*ever be with the Lord*" in the heavens in an immortal body, which is a far superior option to living as a prisoner in a mortal body *or* to being put to death. He couldn't possibly have been referring to dying and being with Christ in an afterlife when he wrote, "*having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ,*" since he'd just finished telling his readers that he *wasn't* going to say whether he'd rather live or die, and that neither of the two likely options were particularly desirable. Now, some Bible translations make it look like he simply couldn't decide whether he'd prefer to live or die, but he outright said that his

⁴⁶ For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Romans 11:36

⁴⁷ But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. — Philippians 1:12-17

desire was “to depart,” so those translations don’t actually make any sense if “to depart” meant “to die.” Besides, he’d already told the Corinthians that he didn’t want to be “*unclothed*,”⁴⁸ meaning he didn’t want to die, but instead wanted to be “*clothed upon*” with the immortal body that he’ll only receive when he’s quickened, so either way, the traditional interpretation of this verse just doesn’t work. Bottom line, there’s just no excuse for interpreting it in a way that contradicts the rest of Scripture, which the teaching that Paul would live on after his death and “*ever be with the Lord*” from that point rather than from the time the body of Christ is caught up together to meet the Lord in the air does in spades. It’s easy to get confused about verses like this if you ignore the context (of both the surrounding verses, and of Scripture as a whole), but once someone comes to realize the truth that death is actually death, and that “*ye shall not surely die*” is a satanic lie, they can then begin to interpret these passages in ways that are consistent with the rest of Scripture.

Christians don’t only misquote Paul in order to try to prove the immortality of the soul, however. Many also misquote Jesus as well, making Him out to have said, “If you die in your sins, whither I go, you cannot come.” This isn’t what Jesus said at all, though. He actually said, “*I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.*”⁴⁹ This was a proclamation of fact, not an if/then proposition, as many misunderstand it to be (it helps to notice the plural “ye” in Jesus’ statement, since He was talking to, and about, the unbelieving Pharisees at the time,⁵⁰ prophesying that all those Pharisees

⁴⁸ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. — 2 Corinthians 5:3-4

⁴⁹ Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. — John 8:21

⁵⁰ The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. — John 8:13

hearing that statement would indeed die in their sins and miss out on “eternal life” when He returns). Now, yes, in a follow-up statement (in John 8:24), He did say, *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,”* but aside from what I already pointed out (that the Pharisees to whom Jesus made the first prophetic statement definitely *would* die in their sins), this doesn’t help prove the immortality of the soul either. All it proves is that certain people would die in their sins.

Likewise, they misread passages such as Revelation 6:9–11⁵¹ to defend the idea of the immortality of the soul as well, but if this passage were meant to be read literally it would mean that martyred ghosts are all trapped underneath an altar rather than enjoying life in heaven, and that these ghosts can wear physical clothing. This passage is obviously meant to be interpreted symbolically, with the “souls” of the martyrs no more literally talking to God than Abel’s soul was talking to God from the dirt in Genesis 4:9–10⁵² (which would have been just as unusual a place for a soul to reside, if the immortality of the soul were true, as it would be for a soul to reside underneath an altar until its resurrection), especially when taking everything else we’ve just covered into consideration.

⁵¹ And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. — Revelation 6:9-11

⁵² And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. — Genesis 4:9-10

Some also attempt to argue that the reference to the Gospel having been preached to them that are dead, as 1 Peter 4:6 mentions,⁵³ means the dead must be conscious. At this point it should go without saying, based on all the passages we've already looked at, that there's no question the dead are unconscious, so any passages one brings up to try to argue that they remain conscious have to be interpreted in light of the facts we've already covered, which means that the people mentioned in this passage who had the Gospel preached to them had to have still been physically alive at the time it was preached to them, meaning the Gospel was preached to them, and they then died at a later point.

In addition, some also like to quote Hebrews 9:27⁵⁴ in order to argue for the existence of a conscious afterlife, because they believe it means that each individual will experience their judgement immediately after they die. Whatever this verse is actually referring to, however, it can't be saying that at all, because we know that the judgement of individuals who have died won't take place until after they've been physically resurrected from the dead at the Great White Throne⁵⁵ (presuming they aren't in the body of Christ, in which case they have an entirely different "judgement," so to speak⁵⁶), so anyone who tries to use this verse to prove an afterlife is forgetting this minor detail. On top of that,

⁵³ For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. — 1 Peter 4:6

⁵⁴ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. — Hebrews 9:27

⁵⁵ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. — Revelation 20:11-13

⁵⁶ But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. — Romans 14:10

though, this verse can't actually be talking about humans as a whole at all, because that would contradict the rest of Scripture if it was, considering the fact that many people were recorded as being resurrected throughout the Bible who later would have died a second time as well (unless you believe that Lazarus and everyone else raised from the dead are still alive today, not to mention the fact that many people alive today will die a second time too, in the lake of fire⁵⁷), so whatever this verse is talking about, it can't mean that humans only die once either, thus confirming that pretty much all of the traditional interpretations of the verse are incorrect. As for what this verse is talking about, it's actually a callback to the death of high priests as mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures (specifically in the books of Numbers⁵⁸ and Joshua,⁵⁹ as any Israelite reading a book called Hebrews back when it was written should have

⁵⁷ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. — Revelation 21:8

⁵⁸ And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. — Numbers 35:25-28

⁵⁹ And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled. — Joshua 20:6

recognized), based on the context of the rest of the chapter,⁶⁰ as well as the existence of the Definite Article before the word “men” in the verse (it’s not as clear in the KJV as it is in certain other translations, but if you look at the original Greek you can see that the writer of Hebrews had to have meant, “it is appointed unto **the** men once to die,” referring only to the death of certain men, specifically the high priests of Israel — including Jesus, of course — based on the mention of the high priest in verse 25, as well as all the other references to Jesus’ death throughout the rest of the chapter, not to mention the fact that the death and judgement of any other humans just doesn’t fit the context of the chapter at all). Whenever a high priest died, there was a judgement which resulted in the freedom of certain Israelite sinners, as mentioned in those passages in Numbers and Joshua, and Jesus’ death as high priest resulted in the freedom of even more Israelites.

However, the main passage they try to use to defend the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–

⁶⁰ It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Hebrews 9:23-28

31.⁶¹ This passage uses the word “hell” in the KJV (although many English Bible versions use the transliteration of “hades” instead, because this particular “hell” was translated from the Greek ᾗδης/“hah'-dace” in the KJV), but it’s obviously about a whole other “hell” than the one where the lake of fire will be located, since that one is going to be a physical “hole” (or valley) here on earth (as demonstrated in my aforementioned longer Bible study, as well as in my shorter “*What the Hinnom?*” study), and this one appears to refer to an afterlife realm of some sort (at least if one takes this story literally), which means it doesn’t seem like much about that “hell” can be applied to this one, and vice versa (although there actually is a connection one can make between the two, which I’ll explain shortly). And so, even if this passage were meant to be taken literally, it couldn’t be used to prove never-ending torment the way some Christians try to use it, since Revelation 20:13 tells us that anyone who is in this version of “hell” will eventually leave it when they’re resurrected from the dead so they can be judged at the Great White Throne,⁶² and then possibly cast into the version of

⁶¹ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. — Luke 16:19-31

⁶² And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. — Revelation 20:13

“hell” known as the lake of fire to die a second time, and since the particular “hell” translated from ᾗδης is also said to be cast into the lake of fire, according to Revelation 20:14⁶³ (which I believe is referring figuratively to being the only place people will die, or at least the only place where the dead will be located, from then on), and because something can’t be cast into itself, figuratively or otherwise, we know that this “hell” and the lake of fire can’t possibly be the same thing.

At the end of the day, though, all the passages we’ve already covered make it quite clear that the dead can’t be conscious, which means there’s absolutely no way Jesus could have possibly meant for this story to have been interpreted literally, at least not without contradicting the rest of the Bible (not to mention basic common sense about how consciousness works, as we’ve also already discussed), since to do so would mean the rich man and Lazarus actually *were* alive while dead, contrary to what all the passages we just looked at say. Besides, unless one believes that Lazarus was sitting inside Abraham’s chest, that there’s actually physical water and fire that ghosts can interact with (not to mention gravity that they’re subject to, somehow keeping them from floating over a chasm even though there’s no matter there to be affected by gravity) in this supposed afterlife dimension which Jesus is apparently unveiling to Israelites for the first time (remember, no passage of Scripture prior to Luke 16 had ever revealed such an afterlife — in fact, until Jesus told this story, anyone who based their theology entirely upon what the Scripture which was available to them at that time said would assume nobody is even conscious when they’re dead, as we’ve already learned — and, as I mentioned in those other Bible studies where I discussed the supposedly figurative usage of the Valley of Hinnom to describe a fiery afterlife realm, it seems extremely unlikely that the Person who corrected people for teaching extrabiblical theological concepts

⁶³ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. — Revelation 20:14

by saying things like “have ye not read...?”⁶⁴ and “it is written...”⁶⁵ would suddenly turn around and teach a concept of an afterlife that is not only found *nowhere* in the Hebrew Scriptures, but which also seems to contradict everything the Hebrew Scriptures said about the state of the dead, as well as what he told the Sadducees about God being the God of the living rather than of the dead, a few chapters later, as we’ve already discussed, which would mean God couldn’t have been the God of Lazarus while he remained dead, if the “events” in this story actually took place), they’re already not interpreting this story particularly literally. Not to mention, if we did take it literally, we’d have to believe that the rich all go to a place called hell when they die, while the poor all get saved, since there’s literally zero indication in this story that Lazarus was a believer. The reason Jesus said Lazarus went to “Abraham’s bosom” seemed to be entirely because of his suffering as a beggar, not because He’d accepted Christ as his Saviour or anything like that — and likewise, the reason the rich man was said to be suffering in “hell” was because he got to enjoy good things during his life,⁶⁶ and not because he rejected Jesus (there was no indication in the story that either Lazarus or the rich man had ever even heard of Jesus). The fact of the matter is, no Christians actually believe *any* of that, which means they’re already basically interpreting the story entirely figuratively to begin with (not to mention reading numerous assumptions into the text in order to make the story fit with their theology), so they should really just finally acknowledge that it’s 100% figurative, since they already read it that way anyway (even if they haven’t realized that they’re doing so), meant to convey a message that had nothing to do with an afterlife at all, and everything

⁶⁴ But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; — Matthew 12:3

⁶⁵ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. — Matthew 4:4

⁶⁶ But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. — Luke 16:25

to do with potentially missing out on getting to enjoy life in the kingdom of God when it begins in Israel just like most of Jesus' other warnings were about, especially in light of everything else we've covered about the state of the dead. Jesus was basically just using this figurative story to let his audience know that the kingdom of God would be taken from the religious leadership in Israel, meaning the covetous Pharisees who were listening to him tell this story,⁶⁷ as well as the chief priests, which the purple and fine linen on the rich man tells us he represented in this story, and that it will be given to other, "lesser" Israelites⁶⁸ — meaning Jesus' "lowly" disciples,⁶⁹ along with other Israelites who are among "*the least of these*," currently scattered among the Gentiles,⁷⁰ possibly not even realizing yet that they're actually Israelites — who will form "*a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" in the land of Israel at the time they're resurrected from the dead at the resurrection of the just, or if they've "endured to the end" and survived the Tribulation,⁷¹ especially if they're among the

⁶⁷ And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. — Luke 16:14

⁶⁸ Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. — Matthew 21:42-45

⁶⁹ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. — Acts 4:13

⁷⁰ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. — John 10:16

⁷¹ And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. — Matthew 10:22

144,000 Israelites spread among the nations who will be sealed at that time⁷² (and the fact that some Israelites will miss out on enjoying life in the kingdom at that time is the connection between the two “hells” I mentioned earlier, since this is a story meant to convey that the religious leaders will miss out on enjoying life in the kingdom when it begins in Israel, with ending up dead in the “hell” known as the lake of fire for a period of time being at least one of the possible things that will keep them from it). Please note that I’m not insisting this is a parable, however (even though it almost certainly is one), because if I did, some Christians would argue that it *can’t* be a parable based on the fact that Jesus mentioned someone by name in the story, and because He’d never done so in any other parables before. And while this is a really weak argument, rather than get into that whole debate I’ll just say, since we know that basically nothing Jesus said in this passage can be read literally anyway, parable or not, it’s still entirely figurative, and leave it at that.

So, rather than going to literal afterlife realms called heaven or hell after we die, Scripture instead tells us that death is a return:

⁷² And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. — Revelation 7:1-8

- The body returns to the dust,⁷³ meaning to the ground.
- The soul returns to “hell,”⁷⁴ meaning to unconsciousness. The phrase “*shall be turned into*” in Psalm 9:17 in the KJV is simply a poetic translation of the Hebrew שׁוּב/“shoob,” which literally means “is returned to,” telling us that one’s soul does a U-turn back into some place or state referred to as “hell” in the KJV, also transliterated as “sheol” in some other Bible versions, since this “hell” is translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל/“sheh-ole’.” This verse just tells us that our consciousness returns to the nonexistence from whence it came, which is all that most of the passages in the KJV which talk about people going to a place called “hell” after they die are referring to, be it passages translated from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל or from the Greek ᾗδης, which itself is the Greek translation of the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל, as we know from the fact that Acts 2:27⁷⁵ (which translated “hell” from the Greek ᾗδης in the KJV) was quoting Psalm 16:10⁷⁶ (which translated “hell” from the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל in the KJV). Oh, and before someone brings up the fact that Psalm 9:17 is talking about “the wicked,” keep in mind that it still tells us they’ll *return* to “hell,” which means they had to have come from there to begin with, so regardless of who this particular verse is talking about, it still means that the “hell” the dead end up in can’t be what most Christians assume it is because it means they’ve already “been there” before, figuratively speaking, meaning they didn’t exist at one time, and will return to that state of nonexistence again in the future, with

⁷³ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. — Genesis 3:19

⁷⁴ The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. — Psalm 9:17

⁷⁵ Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Acts 2:27

⁷⁶ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. — Psalm 16:10

their soul, meaning their consciousness, being “hidden or unseen” at that point, which is why it’s said that one’s soul is in “hell” when one dies.

- The spirit returns to God Who gave it,⁷⁷ although not as a conscious entity, since our spirits aren’t conscious on their own without a body (soul, or feeling and consciousness, is an emergent property of combining a spirit with a body,⁷⁸ just like combining the colours yellow and blue creates the colour green — the spirit is our “breath of life,” but it doesn’t experience consciousness when it’s not inside a physical body).

This presents quite a dilemma for the popular view, of course. If the soul of a dead person was existing consciously in an actual place called hell and the spirit was with God, would the soul of an unsaved person suffer in a fiery location while the spirit enjoyed being with God in heaven? Remember, Scripture doesn’t discriminate between “saved” and “unsaved” spirits when it says they return to God upon death (to claim that only the saved spirits return to God is to read one’s presuppositions into the text). And what does that say about us if our spirit and soul can go to separate places but are both conscious (are we made up of two conscious beings that can be split up when we die, yet only one will be punished for sin in hell while the other is in heaven with God)? This is just one more reason why the common view makes no sense. Instead, it’s better to believe what Scripture actually says: that souls can actually die.⁷⁹ On top of that, if those who are saved “go to heaven” as soon as they die, then death isn’t really an enemy to be defeated (and, really, destroyed⁸⁰) at all, as

⁷⁷ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12:7

⁷⁸ 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. — Genesis 2:7

⁷⁹ Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. — Ezekiel 18:4

⁸⁰ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Corinthians 15:26

Paul told us it is, but is instead actually an ally finally bringing us to God (and causing us to “*ever be with the Lord*” before the time Paul said this would actually occur), with our eventual resurrection just being icing on the cake rather than being the actual cake itself that it’s supposed to be (the resurrection and/or quickening of our human bodies has become nothing more than a small side note in most of Christendom, when it’s what we’re actually supposed to be looking forward to).

There’s an even more important reason to reject the idea of the immortality of the soul, however, and this is the fact that one can’t join the body of Christ while truly believing in the doctrine. You see, when Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 what the Gospel was that his readers believed when they were saved⁸¹ (referring to the special “eternal life” type of salvation that involves being baptized into the body of Christ and not the general salvation that everyone will eventually experience, as proven in my longer Bible study, so please read that study if you aren’t familiar with the scriptural proof of the eventual salvation of all humanity), he wrote that not only did they come to believe that Christ died for our sins, but also that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day. Now, every Christian out there will claim to agree that these words are true, but few of them actually understand what they mean, and can you really believe something you don’t understand? Yes, all of us who call ourselves Bible believers agree that the words “Christ died for our sins” and “He was buried” are true, but how many of us *actually* agree that “**He** was buried”? Most believe that *His body* was buried, but they also believe that **He Himself** *went somewhere else altogether* (meaning they believe He went to

⁸¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: — 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

another dimension called “hell” — or hades, depending on their preferred Bible translation — as a conscious being for those three days, even if it was in a part of “hell” known as “Abraham’s bosom,” which they also believe is referred to as “paradise,” based on a misunderstanding of another passage that I’ll discuss shortly). The problem is, Paul didn’t say that only Christ’s body died, he said, “**Christ** died”; and he didn’t say that only Christ’s body was buried while He Himself went somewhere else, he said, “**He** was buried,” which means that **He Himself** was placed in the tomb, not that He Himself went somewhere else while His body was placed in the tomb (“He was buried” is a passive statement as far as Christ’s person goes, so even if you believe that Christ Himself actually ended up in the tomb temporarily as a ghost, the wording of that passage can’t be interpreted to mean He followed His body to the tomb from the cross as a ghost, then went somewhere else from there after His body was buried, or even just remained in the tomb as a ghost for three days, because the way it’s worded tells us He had no involvement in being buried at all, other than passively having it happen to Him; so unless his pallbearers also had some sort of mystical object or magical spell which they used to drag Him into the tomb as a ghost after He died — which wouldn’t fit with what John 19:30 says, since it says He “*gave up the ghost*,”⁸² not that He *became* a ghost — it can’t legitimately be said that “He was buried” unless He *was* His body and nothing more at that point). Paul didn’t just randomly include the words “*He was buried*” in this passage for no reason (all Scripture is inspired by God,⁸³ and every word God inspired to be written down is meant to be there,⁸⁴ which means every word is there for a reason, rather than just being arbitrarily thrown in there by the

⁸² When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. — John 19:30

⁸³ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: — 2 Timothy 3:16

⁸⁴ The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. — Psalm 12:6

human writer as would be the case if those who believe in the immortality of the soul were correct). If Christ's (and not just His body's) burial wasn't a crucial part of what Paul said his readers believed when they were saved, he would have just written that "Christ died for our sins and rose the third day," and left those particular words about His burial out altogether, since mentioning that fact would have then been entirely superfluous (not to mention deceptive, at least to anyone who takes the words written there seriously). There's a reason that Paul included the words "He was buried" as something he claimed those who experience the special "eternal life" sort of salvation he wrote about have to believe, and the reason is that we have to believe (which means we have to first understand) what those specific words actually mean. (And for anyone who might still be sceptical, if Paul *was* trying to tell us it's important to believe that Christ actually did lose consciousness when He died — just as He would have every time He went to sleep, unless you believe He remained aware of Himself and His surroundings when He slept as well — and that **He Himself** was buried rather than just His body while He went elsewhere, I'd like you to tell me what Paul would have needed to have written differently there in order to convince you of this.)

And before someone tries to protest, saying that Jesus had the power to resurrect Himself, which means He must have been conscious, pointing out Jesus' claim in John 10:18 that He had power to take His life again,⁸⁵ the word "power" in this verse, translated from the Greek ἐξουσία/"ex-oo-see'-ah," is just referring to the sort of right that someone in authority has to have an action they wish to be completed actually be performed. Just because a king is said to have the "power" to tax the citizens of his country doesn't mean he personally goes to every single citizen of the country and forces them to give him the

⁸⁵ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. — John 10:18

money directly; it just means that he has the legal authority to expect they'll pay their taxes. Likewise, Pilate had the "power"⁸⁶ (also translated from the Greek ἐξουσία) to crucify Jesus, but that doesn't mean he physically performed the actual crucifixion himself with his own strength, but instead had his soldiers do the actual deed under his legal authority (and so what Jesus said just meant: *"I have the right to lay [my life] down, and I have the right to receive it again,"* and He did receive it again, when He was woken from His sleep by His Father⁸⁷). Likewise, when Jesus said in John 2:19 that He would raise His body three days after His death,⁸⁸ it's important to remember the fact that *"He was buried,"* and that any passage we read about His resurrection *has* to be interpreted in such a way that it doesn't contradict this crucial part of what Paul said his readers believed when they were saved, which means that Jesus could *only* be referring to raising His body in the sense of getting up off the slab in the tomb after His God and Father⁸⁹ resurrected Him from the dead (which is Who the Bible says actually raised Him from the dead anyway⁹⁰). The context of this passage in John wasn't about His ability to resurrect Himself to begin with; if you read the

⁸⁶ Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. — John 19:10-11

⁸⁷ For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. — 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

⁸⁸ Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. — John 2:19

⁸⁹ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: — Ephesians 1:3

⁹⁰ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) — Galatians 1:1

whole passage, you'll see that it was simply about how the fact that He wouldn't remain dead would be a sign to the people who heard Him.⁹¹

Of course, some will now ask, "But doesn't 1 Peter 3:19 say that Jesus preached to spirits in prison while He was dead?"⁹² Well, no, it doesn't. He didn't preach to the spirits until *after* His body was quickened/made immortal (which obviously couldn't happen until after He was resurrected from the dead), as we can see from the verse before that one.⁹³ But regardless, Peter said He was preaching to spirits, not to souls. Since, as we already learned, the spirits of dead humans return to God in heaven (just as Jesus' spirit did when He died,⁹⁴ unlike His soul, which instead was said to have figuratively gone to "hell,"⁹⁵ demonstrating that human spirits and souls are not the same thing), the spirits He was preaching to couldn't have been humans, which means they must have

⁹¹ Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. — John 2:18-22

⁹² By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; — 1 Peter 3:19

⁹³ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: — 1 Peter 3:18

⁹⁴ 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. — Luke 23:46

⁹⁵ Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. — Acts 2:27-31

instead been spiritual beings, exactly as Peter said they were.⁹⁶ They weren't the spirits of humans, but rather were the spiritual beings who sinned in Noah's time⁹⁷ by breeding with humans (and creating the giants who became mighty men of renown,⁹⁸ also sometimes referred to as the Nephilim), and who were then locked up in that other version of "hell"⁹⁹ (rendered as Tartarus in some Bible translations, since this "hell" is translated from the Greek ταρταρώ/"tar-tar-o'-o") because of their sin. Besides, all passages have to be interpreted in light of Christ's burial anyway, so it goes without saying that any attempts to argue that Jesus was actually conscious while He was dead are nonstarters because of that fact alone, and that any passages we think might imply He was actually still alive have to be interpreted accordingly.

But is it really so important that we should care what Paul meant when he wrote that Christ died and was buried? Well, yes, very much so! It's only when we realize that Christ *actually* died and was buried that we can truly appreciate His faith in going to the cross. You see, He knew that, unless His Father resurrected Him, He would have remained dead, and, as Paul explained

⁹⁶ Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. — 1 Peter 3:20

⁹⁷ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. — Jude 1:6

⁹⁸ And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. — Genesis 6:1-4

⁹⁹ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; — 2 Peter 2:4

in Romans 3:21–23,¹⁰⁰ *this* is the faith that ultimately saves us: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by *faith of Jesus Christ* [not “by faith **in** Jesus Christ”; this is all about *Christ’s faith*, not our own] unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.”

Unfortunately, because most Christians don’t *actually* believe that Christ *truly* died for our sins and *actually was* buried, instead believing that only His body did and was, while He Himself lived on and went somewhere else altogether, none of these particular Christians can be said to have been baptized into the body of Christ yet, since they haven’t truly believed what Paul said those who experience the special sort of salvation he wrote about will believe at the time they’re saved.

All of the above should really be all the proof anyone needs that the doctrine of never-ending torment can’t possibly be true, since A) the dead aren’t conscious, and hence can’t suffer without end in the “hell” they end up in, and B) those humans who end up in the lake of fire will also be dead (as demonstrated in that longer Bible study, as well as in my shorter “*What the Hinnom?*” study), making them impervious to any suffering as well, which means that any of the “proof texts” you’ve been told teach this doctrine have to mean something else altogether. Still, if hell isn’t a “place” where “unsaved” humans exist consciously after they die, then what about heaven? What and where is it, and how do people go there? Well, for the answer to that, you’ll have to read that aforementioned longer Bible study (or my shorter one titled “*Heaven isn’t what you think it is*”).

¹⁰⁰ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; — Romans 3:21-23

The bottom line, though, is that nobody mentioned anywhere in the Bible was ever recorded as looking forward to an afterlife in a place called heaven, or as being afraid of being punished consciously in an afterlife realm called hell, nor had any Scripture prior to the story of the rich man and Lazarus ever even suggested that people would go to an afterlife realm to live happily or to suffer in while dead either, and the fact that the concept of an afterlife realm for ghosts wasn't ever taught in the Hebrew Scriptures should really tell you everything you need to know about the idea. Now, yes, there is a certain type of passage which some Christians who don't want to let go of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul will read their assumptions into in order to claim they do teach it, such as Genesis 15:15, for example, which says, "*And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace,*" and if one weren't aware of everything we've just covered, and they assumed that there is an afterlife realm which the dead end up in, it's easy to see how somebody could read that assumption into this statement, concluding that Abram's (Abraham's) ancestors are in this afterlife realm, and that he would eventually join them there as well. However, there isn't anything in the verse that actually says his fathers were in any sort of afterlife realm at all — the idea that an afterlife realm is where they were located is nothing more than an assumption one has to read into the text based on doctrinal presuppositions — and based on what we've now learned, they couldn't possibly have been in one, since we now know that the dead are simply unconscious in the grave. And this fact is confirmed in the second half of the verse, which tells us that the grave is exactly where they were, giving us the location of his fathers which Abraham would eventually go to, when it says, "*thou shalt be buried in a good old age.*"¹⁰¹ What most people don't realize is that this verse is using a figure of speech known as a Synonymous Parallelism, which is where the second part of a passage in Scripture confirms, and even clarifies, what the first part is saying, using slightly different wording, in this

¹⁰¹ And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. — Genesis 15:15

case by telling us that Abraham would end up being buried with his ancestors after he'd lived to an old age, which means that these sorts of passages are simply talking about physical death and burial, and that they can't be used to defend the doctrine of the immortality of the soul at all.

And so, as I said, nobody mentioned anywhere in the Bible was ever recorded as looking forward to an afterlife of any sort. What they *were* looking forward to was a physical, bodily resurrection¹⁰² in the distant future,¹⁰³ so figurative passages such as the one in Luke 16, and symbolic statements such as those in the book of Revelation, have to be interpreted in light of this fact (when Job said, *"But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost,"* and then asked, *"and where is he?"*),¹⁰⁴ Job wasn't wondering where the dead are residing while remaining in a conscious state, as some mistakenly assume, but was just speaking rhetorically to point out that the hypothetical dead man no longer exists, since he made it very clear in the next few verses that he believed the dead are gone until their future resurrection by answering his own question, saying, *"As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire*

¹⁰² And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. — Job 19:26-27

¹⁰³ Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. — John 11:21-24

¹⁰⁴ But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? — Job 14:10

to the work of thine hands"¹⁰⁵). The story in Luke 16 wasn't a new revelation to replace the scriptural doctrine of unconscious death until resurrection, so one has to figure out what it means without creating an entirely new theology that not only hadn't ever even been hinted at prior to it in Scripture, but that would also contradict other parts of Scripture, which also means that any scriptural references to the version of "hell" that dead souls are in can't be talking about a place any human will actually suffer in, and neither can any passages that talk about the lake of fire (at least they won't be able to suffer there any longer than it takes for a mortal body to die in that fire). And so, the simple fact is, every single person who dies goes to "hell" (meaning the "hell" used as a figure of speech for the state of being unconscious because one is dead), whether they're a believer or not. And only those who do understand and believe what it is Paul meant when he wrote that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, will get to go to heaven, but not until after they've been resurrected and/or made immortal, because the only way for someone who is dead to go to heaven would be to put their corpse on an aircraft or space shuttle, as we learned in my *"Heaven isn't what you think it is"* study, but they wouldn't enjoy it particularly much (although this does mean that someone who has died can technically be in heaven and hell at the exact same time, not that they'd know they were in either "location").

This also means that Enoch and Elijah didn't go to live in heaven rather than dying either (at least not the same "level" of heaven that Jesus is now living in, which is presumably the Jerusalem which is above), contrary to the way

¹⁰⁵ As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. — Job 14:11-15

Christians assume they did, since whatever happened to them can't contradict what you've already learned from this study. Genesis 5:24¹⁰⁶ is not an easy verse to understand, but based on everything we've covered so far, we know that Jesus is the only human living in heaven (at least in the part of heaven outside of earth's orbit where the body of Christ will go to live after they've been resurrected and/or quickened), so they couldn't have, which means that Enoch had to have gone somewhere other than heaven when he "was not" and was "taken by God." The most probable explanation is that he was simply "caught away" from a dangerous situation where he would have been killed, to live out the rest of his life in safety somewhere else, similar to the way Philip was "caught away" after baptizing the eunuch,¹⁰⁷ which seems to line up with the fact that the book of Hebrews includes Enoch in a list of people who lived by faith¹⁰⁸ while also saying that everyone in the list died.¹⁰⁹ And it's recorded that King Jehoram received a letter from Elijah¹¹⁰ after the time that Elijah was

¹⁰⁶ and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. — Genesis 5:24

¹⁰⁷ And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. — Acts 8:39

¹⁰⁸ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. — Hebrews 11:5

¹⁰⁹ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. — Hebrews 11:13

¹¹⁰ And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: Behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day. — 2 Chronicles 21:12-15

caught up in the whirlwind to heaven,¹¹¹ so, again, based on everything we now know about who is in heaven, this means that Elijah pretty much had to have been deposited somewhere else on earth to live out the rest of his life in safety too, just like Enoch, and that he then also eventually died, just like Enoch.

Why does all this matter, though? Well, as we've already learned when discussing the fact that ***He was buried*** is a part of the Gospel Paul said someone has to believe in order to be saved into the body of Christ, if you believe in the immortality of the soul, it means you haven't actually fully believed this Gospel, and hence haven't been saved yet. And if you want to learn all of the requirements of salvation, I recommend reading my aforementioned longer Bible study, which tells you everything Scripture says you need to know if you do want to enjoy membership in the body of Christ.

¹¹¹ And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. — 2 Kings 2:1-11