

# On Being Dead

Douglas Thomas

There is a place called “sheol” in Hebrew, “hades” in Greek, & “the grave” in English.

In the Bible from Genesis to the Revelation, it is consistently referenced as the place where humans are put to rest after their deaths. Their state there is consistently described as “asleep.” Though there is a description of separation of good people from bad people in the Book of Enoch, which is quoted in the Bible as a reliable source of revelation, the descriptions in the Bible only refer to the place in general as the place where the spirits of all dead humans are.

It is consistently described as being “down” in contrast to the surface of the earth.

It is clearly the place where the dead (with an exception) are until all humans are judged. The exception is in Revelation chapter 20, where John wrote that the only people who will reign with Jesus for 1000 years on the earth are only those who have been beheaded for not worshiping the beast or his image, and for not receiving his mark on their hands or foreheads. He wrote about that event, “The rest of the dead did not live again until after the thousand years were finished.” He added, “This is the first resurrection.” (The producers of the “Left Behind Series” didn’t notice these two points, I think.)

Two dimensions in which humans are bound (with rare exception), are time and space. We can’t be in two places at once (with possible rare exception), and we can’t (with rare exception) move from one place to another without the required process of traveling there through each part of space between the beginning and the end of the trip. We cannot skip portions of time or repeat sections of time without some supernatural intervention to make those exceptions to earthly physics possible.

Jesus, however, is not bound by those two restrictive dimensions. Before Abraham was, He still is (John 8:58). He was slain from the foundation of the earth (Revelation 13:8). By some mystery, we were crucified with Him (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20). Being “in Christ” means, by some mystery, that what is true of Him becomes true of us (Ephesians 1:4). We are seated in Him already in Heaven (Ephesians 2:6). He has already experienced the day of human judgement, and we have too, by a mystery.

We are, *in Him*, unrestricted by time and space now. Outside of this earthly space, outside of this sequence of seconds ticking off of our clocks, we can experience any time or any space in Him. If I am wondering where a dead person is, and I am looking for the answer from the perspective of being on the time line, they are still in the grave. I can only see “now.” If I am outside of this restrictive, clock-bound dimension, and asking the question from “in Christ,” they are already judged and enjoying the time-free future of eternity.

Both answers are true. But only one is true from “here” and from “now.”

I have heard many people wondering about where a deceased loved one might be. I don’t remember hearing anyone answer the questions with any Scripture but 2 Corinthians 5:8. There are many other very relevant words to be found, though.

## **What's it Like Being Dead?**

### **Deuteronomy 31:16**

Moses was told that he would "sleep" (some translations, "rest") with his ancestors.

### **1 Samuel 28:7-15**

Samuel was apparently "disturbed" from rest by Saul, through a witch who called him "up" from the grave ("sheol").

### **Job 3:13**

Job said that if he had died at birth, he would have gone to sleep.

### **Job 3:17-19**

All of the dead seem to be asleep together.

### **Psalms 115:17**

The dead do not praise God (there had been no general resurrection when this was written, and Revelation 20:5 says that the first resurrection is not until the beginning of the Millennium; Revelation 7 is a description of the dead having been raised to praise.)

### **Daniel 12:2**

The dead who "sleep in the dust of the earth" will "awaken" - some to eternal death, some to eternal life (e.g. good and bad seem to be asleep together until the judgement).

### **John 11:1-11**

Jesus said to His disciples that Lazarus was "sleeping," and that He was going to "awaken" Him. He made it clear then that Lazarus was truly dead, since the disciples could not understand death and sleep being equal.

### **Acts 7:60**

Stephen "fell asleep".

### **Acts 13:36**

David "fell asleep".

### **1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

Dying was spoken of as "falling asleep".

### **1 Corinthians 15:50-51**

Those who do not die before the second appearance of Jesus are not going to "sleep," but be transformed.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-15**

Christians who die are "asleep in Christ."

## **Where Are You After You Die?**

### **1 Samuel 28:7-15**

Samuel was brought "up" from the dead.

### **Luke 23:43**

Jesus told the repentant thief on the cross beside Him that he would be with Him in Paradise that day, but:

### **John 20:17**

When Jesus was talking to Mary on the day of His resurrection from the dead, (after having been in Paradise with the thief on the day of His crucifixion). He told her that He had "not yet ascended" to where His Father was. Paradise is not defined in Scripture.

## **Don't You Go Straight to Heaven If You Are Saved?**

### **Psalms 148:4**

There is more than one level of Heaven. Paradise, (like "Sheol" in the Old Testament, and "the Grave" or "Hades" in the New Testament) could very well be a level of Heaven, but cannot be the place where the throne of Jesus is located, because Jesus was in the "lower places of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9,10) until He was "raised" from the dead.

### **Deuteronomy 10:14**

There is a "highest Heaven," also called the "Heaven of Heavens."

### **1 Kings 8:27**

The "Heaven of Heavens" is mentioned as a place that is just a place in the Heavens.

### **2 Corinthians 12:2**

Paul knew someone who had been to the "third Heaven."

## **Doesn't Paul Say That if He Died, He Would Be With Christ?**

### **Psalms 139:8**

Even if I make my bed in sheol, God is there with me, so no matter where I go when I die, I am with God! (Note: KJV mistranslated sheol here as "hell" for some reason)

### **2 Corinthians 5:8**

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, but:

### **Philippians 1:21-23**

Being alive now is being present with Christ, because:

### **1 Thessalonians 5:10**

Whether I am dead or alive, "awake" or "asleep," I am with Christ.