

## **WHERE ARE THE DEAD?**

The DEAD are those who are no more living, or are no more having the breath of life in them.

Today, there are divergent views by people of different beliefs or faiths as to where dead people go after death.

There are people who hold that no one can tell where the dead go or what happens to man at death.

The heathens for instance believe that when a man dies, he does not die but merely changes his form, and becomes more powerful. They also believe that the dead are transformed to live another life, hence, when announcing their death, they use the word "transition". Some say that the spirit of the dead hover around his people – hearing and seeing them, hence some worship or serve the dead.

Some who profess the Christian faith believe and teach that if a good man dies he goes to heaven; while the wicked go to a place of fire called hell. Some say that most dead people go to purgatory – a place which according to them, the dead are purged of whatever sin they had committed before they would be fit to enter heaven.

Other views about the dead by some are expressed in the doctrines of REINCARNATION (that is, the return of the soul of a dead person to earth after death in a fresh bodily form) and TRANSMIGRATION (which is the passing of the soul of a dead person into some other material form or body – whether human, animal, plant or inanimate object). Many who share these beliefs hold that soul is a part of man that continues to live after his death.

These views are not correct according to the Holy Bible. To say that the soul is a living entity or being in man, and after death is able to live on its own or enter another body to continue its existence, is very wrong. Also, it is not correct to say that the soul is immortal and that it either goes to heaven to enjoy eternal bliss or into "hell-fire" for punishment. The Bible says that the soul dies. – Ezekiel 18:4,20; Acts 3:23; Psalm 89:48; 22:29.

With regards to the creation of man, the Bible states: "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) The living soul or person is made up of the body from the dust of the ground and breath of life or spirit. When the breath of life or spirit goes out of man or animal, the organs of the body cease to function and that means death.

### **Sentence of Death**

By way of definition, "death" is the cessation of life; hence it is the opposite of life. The origin of death can be traced back to Adam in the Garden of Eden. God commanded him saying: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". – Genesis 2:15-17.

When he broke the law, God passed the sentence of death on him that, "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.

We can see from this text that, in handing down His sentence after man's disobedience, God said Adam would return to the dust from where he was made. This is the grave. Man was made out of the dust and he returns to the dust at his death. The dust therefore, is the place of the dead. And, it is the force of this divine sentence that works in man to bury the dead in the grave, tomb or sepulchre where they turn to dust again. True worshippers of God do not practise cremation (the burning of a corpse to ashes), neither do they dispose of the dead by exposing them to be eaten up by birds or beasts as certain tribes do.

In Ecclesiastes 3:18-20, King Solomon said among other things that, both man and beast have one breath. He added: "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again". Please see also Job 34:15.

The grave is the place of the dead hence both David the Psalmist and Isaiah the Prophet stated that the dead who have gone down into the grave or pit cannot praise God nor remember Him. – Psalm 6:5; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18,19.

Giving reason why the living should not trust nor look out for or hope for blessing and protection from mortal man, King David stated: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." – Psalm 146:3,4.

And giving counsel to the children of God towards making the most of the opportunity of their existence by serving Him faithfully and zealously, King Solomon stated: "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. 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 9:5,6,10.

Moreover, Job categorically stated that at his death, the grave or pit would be his house where he had made his bed, and that his place of rest would be in the dust or grave which he referred to as "the house appointed for all living." – Job 17:13-16; 30:23.

## **Resurrection**

In all the wonderful revelations of God through the ancient prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, as contained in the Holy Bible, no indication is given that a person can be born twice or more. Rather, what is made known is the doctrine of resurrection. And by resurrection is meant the raising of the dead back to life. This God promised to do through Jesus Christ at the time appointed. – Hosea 13:14; John 11:25.

The vision of Ezekiel the prophet concerning the dry bones was a demonstration of how the dead would be raised. (Ezekiel 37:1-14) There is no point of a soul entering into a body and being

reborn. It is the breath of life otherwise referred to as spirit, God would send to revive the dead. – Psalm 104:29,30.

What is more, Jesus Christ said: “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. See also Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15.

The hope of resurrection for the dead makes true Christians not to be overwhelmed by sorrow or to mourn for the dead as non-believers do. St. Paul in his epistle to the Thessalonian Christians said: “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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” – 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14,18.

It is when the dead are raised that they shall be judged and rewarded according to their works as stated by Jesus Christ. Until then, except the “Little flock”, the saints, who go to heaven according to the Scriptures, all others must remain in their graves. Thus, Paul the Apostle stated: “And as it is appointed unto men ONCE to die, but after this the judgment.” – Hebrews 9:27.

It is very clear from the Scriptures that the place of the dead is the grave – “the house appointed for all living” (Job 30:23). The dead are silent, lifeless and motionless in their graves. They are not in any mood of joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain. They have no knowledge any more of anything that is done under the sun. – Ecclesiastes 9:5,6,10.