

LIVING Souls

EXPLORING HOW GOD'S BREATH IN US IMPACTS OUR ETERNAL DESTINY

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

WHAT'S BEHIND THE CURTAIN?

The 1939 movie classic *The Wizard of Oz* was portrayed as being a magnificent almost god-like benefactor who could grant all good things. But the yellow-brick-road journey to get there was long, perilous, fraught with real-life dangers, and even filled with creepy things that could fly out of the fantasy world. In the end, when Dorothy and Co. finally arrived and were able to peek behind the curtain, they found standing there only a simple shy man.

The curtain of death also hides much, and we travel a long road wondering what's at the end. What will happen when I die? What happens to my body? Is there a spirit, or a soul, or both? Will I see God? Is heaven real? What will it be like, and who will be there? When it comes to the mysterious veil of the afterlife, we are also will go to great lengths in order to find out what's on the other side. Naturally, many would like to know in advance what to expect on *the other side*, and disregarding the Bible they seek evidences that would bring assurance and peace to the heart and mind.

RECENT DISCOVERIES

There have been several recent popular claims of knowledge about God and the afterlife.

- *Heaven is For Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back*, (2010) —
- *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, (2012) —
- *The Shack*, a novel (2007) and film (2017) —

COMMUNICATING WITH THE DEAD

Because the Bible strongly condemns the practice of communicating with the dead, the consistent conservative position is that it is actually possible to communicate with THE SPIRIT WORLD. That the Bible calls these spirits *familiar* spirits also suggests some demons have with a unique ability to communicate with particular individuals (Lev 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut 18:11)

SOME TERMS

The prophet Isaiah warned God's people that to consult a medium was to turn one's back on Him, as they invited the hosts of darkness to fellowship with them (Isa 8:19-20).

Here are some common terms relating to communicating with the spirit world:

1. NECROMANCY _____ — The magic or method of gaining unique insight about the future through consulting with the dead
2. OCCULT _____ — The *knowledge of paranormal*, unlike "science" that studies the normal; the study of the spiritual and spirit realm
3. WITCHCRAFT _____ — This word has had very broad meaning through time and across cultures. In the OT (Ex 22:18; Deut 18:10) this word was connected with those who could communicate with the dead. Modern day witchcraft is often associated with communication with spirits and the elementals found in many belief systems (earth, water, fire, air, space).
4. SORcery _____ — Sometimes the New Testament Greek word is *magician*, and sometimes it is translated from the word *pharmaceutical* (Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15). Similar to the word "witchcraft," but sometimes connected to the use of drugs in order to hallucinate and/or connect with the spirit world.

Historically and Biblical it seems we have been fascinated with the spirit world for a very long time. Across the globe and in most cultures many forms are found in:

- Modern Western Paganism
- Various forms of Witchcraft
- Aspects of Traditional African Religion
- Aspects of Eastern Mysticism

THE WITCH OF ENDOR

The story of 1 Samuel 28:3-25 is sometimes used to justify communicating with the dead. In this passage King Saul supposedly summons the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel through the occult service of a witch. To the great surprise of the witch, Samuel appears, and pronounces the impending death of both Saul and his sons. What do we make of this?

Some important factors that will help guide our interpretation are:

1. Samuel's coming back from the dead was OF THE LORD _____, not the witch of Endor
2. The witch's TERROR _____ indicates what happened was not of her doing and beyond her power
3. The witch was not an active participant but a SPECTATOR _____
4. The voice of Samuel did not speak through this medium but DIRECTLY _____ to Saul
5. This occurrence in no way provides APPROVAL _____ of necromancy (1 Chron 10:13,14)

THE BREATH OF GOD IN US

There are two revelations of God linked to his "breath"

1. God's WORD

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. ~ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. ~ 1 Peter 1:22-25

2. God's IMAGE

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ~ Genesis 1:26-27

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 IMAGE OF GOD IN MEN AND WOMEN

The creation of men and women was unique in that they were made in the image of God.

It is true that in creation animals are also said have a *soul*. The Bible uses the words "living creature" in describing them (Gen. 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12), and this is the same Hebrew word (*nephesh*) as used to speak of man's soul (see also Num. 31:28). But never in Scripture are animals considered to possess the image of God, and the term "living creature" distinguish animals from inanimate creation.

In acknowledge that physical death is the universal conclusion, Solomon was careful to distinguish between the spirit of man and the spirit of beast:

All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? ~ Ecclesiastes 3:20-21

MANKIND IS DIFFERENT

Although mankind is similar to animal life in so many ways, we are different.

1. Humanity REPRESENTS _____ God to all creation (Gen 1:26-27; 9:5-6).
2. Humanity COMMUNICATES _____ with God both through physical and spiritual means (Psalm 4; 5; 8).
3. Humanity WORSHIPS _____ God cognitively (John 4:21-24).
4. Humanity is ACCOUNTABLE _____ to God in all things, and will one day see Him (Heb 9:27)
5. Humanity was made to LIVE _____ with God (John 14:1-6; Matt 25:41)

WE WILL CONSIDER ...

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE

- What happens to the body, the spirit, and the soul; physical and spiritual implications
- Life in the blood
- Death by suicide, violence, accident, euthanasia

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

- Blessed hope and terrifying certainty
- The rapture?
- Five resurrections

DESTINY AND DESTINATION

- What does the Bible say about Hell?
- What does the Bible say about Heaven?
- How is one's final destination determined?