



Near Death and Out of Body Experiences

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There has been an ongoing interest, resurgence, and debate around what is termed the “near death” experience (NDE) and out of body experience (OBE). The term “near death” experience is defined as occurring when someone, who has been close to clinical death, or declared clinically dead, leaves his body, but eventually returns to his body to resume one’s life again. In many cases, those who pass through a “near death” experience claim to have died, but then cheat death, since their spirit returns back to their body again and they resume life. However, Biblically, if someone was truly dead and comes back to life, this is not a near-death experience; it’s actually a resurrection from the dead!

The modern definition of a “near death” experience (the spirit leaving a dead body and returning) is misleading. Think of it this way. If someone is in a severe automobile accident and they almost die, or they are close to death, this is a true near death experience. In other words, they do not actually die but they come close to death. However, those who explain the “near death” or “out-of-body” experience often mean something different by this term.

Those who speak of a “near death” experience conclude that a person actually dies, when their spirit leaves the body, and when their

spirit miraculously comes back into their body, after they have been informed that their time on earth is not yet finished. The common understanding of the “near death” experience today is that a person dies temporarily; therefore, they call their experience a near death experience, since the person has not died permanently. They cheat death and their spirit returns to their body to once again live within the body.

The Reports

Not long ago, I was listening to an interview of people who had supposedly died and allegedly experienced the “near death” or “out of body” experience. All of these people had a common or similar story. In general, they were floating around in their spirit and could see the surgeon operating on them or the emergency personnel trying to resuscitate their dead corpse or body. The claim is made by many that these people witnessed themselves trying to be revived by medical personnel and some actually heard themselves pronounced dead.

Those who passed through these experiences claim they experienced an overwhelming sense of peace that was indescribable. Human language was insufficient to depict what occurred. People experienced sensations of extreme pleasure, peace, and quiet. As a result of these incredible feelings of peace and tranquility or love and warmth, the people did not want to come back into their body. Nevertheless, many return for they are told they are not finished with their earthly tasks.



Many report of hearing a noise that is pleasant, something like rapturous music, while others hear harsh and disturbing music like a continual buzzing or ringing sound. Another common experience is that people sense they are being pulled back through a dark passageway or tunnel. The claim is also made by many that there are spiritual

entities present to help them through their death experience. Sometimes these spiritual entities are their loved ones who have already passed away.

One of the most common characteristics is that there was also a being of light present with them. Although the light was brilliant, which was emanating from this being's body, it did not hurt their eyes. This being emanated warmth and love and often communicated with thoughts (telepathy) instead of words. This personal being would often talk to the people about the true meaning of life.

Sometimes those people who have these experiences have a quick review of their entire life which helps them to love others. Many times people with these types of experiences come to some kind of obstruction that prevents them from going any further on their journey. The border is sometimes described as a fence, a door, or a body of water. Others claim they have actually died, gone to Heaven or hell, and then are given the chance to return to share their experience and prepare others for the afterlife.

Lastly, most people who pass through these out-of-body experiences claim they no longer have any fear of death. Today there are actually people who have formed a club made up of those who have died and went through these near death experiences. Although some do not speak of their experience, others want to have a place where they can relate to others who have had a similar experience of dying.

Truth or Experience?

How do we evaluate these reports? Are these types of experiences supported by the Bible? If these experiences are to be trusted as being from God, then how do they fit into Biblical revelation? Does the Bible actually talk about them? And if not, how should we view them?

1 Thessalonians 5:21 says:

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

Christianity is in serious danger today since it is following the way of mysticism and experience. However, we discover that everything

must be tested by the Word of God. Experience is not a valid test for truth; the Word of God is the only valid test for absolute truth. This is why there is a need to “prove” or test and examine everything (“all things”) that we hear and see today by the Word of God. This is a call for careful scrutiny and discernment. We are commanded to examine everything and make sure it aligns with the truth of God’s Word. What is found to be “good” is to be wholeheartedly embraced. What is unbiblical is to be shunned.

Does the Word of God promote and favor what people are saying today regarding out-of-body experiences? Should we believe and openly support those who are sharing these experiences? Yes, these people may be having some kind of experience, but are these experiences supported by the Bible? In other words, does the Bible validate these experiences as being genuine experiences that are related to death and are they actually from God? There are Christians today who get rather disturbed when we try to test or examine everything by the Word of God. Why is this? It is because they have a low view of Scripture. Their emotions and desire for the spectacular overrides the infallibility of the Word of God.

If we do not examine and test the claims, conclusions, and alleged experiences of others by the Word of God, then we will be led astray into all kinds of error. Let me dogmatically assert that the Bible must be the final authority regarding these out of the body experiences and every other experience that people claim to have today. If we begin to follow our feelings on these matters and claims, we will be led away from Biblical revelation into mystical practices. People sometimes ask, “What is your feeling regarding these near death or out-of-body experiences?” I reply to them, “I don’t go by feeling; I go by the Word of God!”

“Feelings come and feeling go
And feeling are deceiving
My warrant is the Word of God
For naught is worth believing.”

Dudley Danielson, in the "National Courier," a Charismatic newspaper, ran an ad. "A Genuine Photograph of the Lord!" He wrote, "Yes, I believe I have one recorded on film. In mid-summer I awoke at 3:30 am to a strong voice thought impression, 'Go and

photograph my sunrise.' Beside the river I set up my camera; waited for the sun, and that predawn I felt so very close to God, perfect peace. On one negative is the perfect shape of a figure, arms raised in blessing, as reflected in the water, exactly opposite every other shadow. I believe God gave me an image of Himself to share."

The item is signed Dudley Danielson, Photographer, and you can get a picture of God for only \$9.95. It doesn't seem to bother Dudley that the Bible says, "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). Nor does it matter to him that the Bible says that, "God is spirit" (John 4:24) and that God Himself said in Exodus 33:20, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." Dudley should be dead according to what the Bible says!

Such extreme examples of experiences like these are not uncommon in the Charismatic Movement. In the November 1990 issue of Charisma Magazine, which is the most popular magazine in the movement, there is a claim made by a lady named Aline Baxley, an ex-alcoholic and drug addict, who says she has been to Hell and God brought her back to tell her story. Experience after experience is reported in the Charismatic press, television, and on radio. A subtle but sinister pattern has developed over the years. Instead of responding to a proper interpretation of God's Word, many Christians are confiding in preposterous tales producing what some have called "pseudo-Christian mysticism."

One woman wrote a preacher and teacher of God's Word and said, "Put away your Bible, your books and stop studying." You see, feelings and experiences are more important than the eternal Word of God. This is a tragic thing and why God has called us to be discerning and prove or test these experiences and see if they line up with what the Bible says and teaches regarding Christian living.

Searching the Scriptures

Acts 17:11

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The Christians from Berea were noted as being Bible students. The word "searched" means to scrutinize, examine, judge or investigate. We are to examine everything that people say and measure it by the yardstick or truth of Scripture. We must determine "whether those things were so" such as "out-of-body" or "near death" experiences which people claim to have. If we stop scrutinizing, we will be swept into the sea of mystical experiences, or the melting pot of end time deception through mysticism (dreams, visions, esoteric experiences). Mysticism says spiritual reality and truth is found through feelings, imagination, personal visions, inner voices and private illumination or other experiences. Mysticism places experience above the Word of God.

Everything must stand or fall in light of the Word of God! One of the frightening things that have been occurring among evangelicalism today is the abandonment of objective truth found in the Bible for the search for subjective truth found in experience. Today we are told we can also discover what is true by listening to the experiences of others.

The church in our generation has become tolerant of outlandish ideas and more intolerant of sound teaching (2 Tim. 4:2-4). The popular evangelical conception of "truth" has become almost completely subjective. People say, "The Bible can be interpreted in so many different ways - who can say which interpretation is right?" In fact, many, who call themselves evangelical Christians, believe there is truth beyond the Bible. This is a very dangerous position to embrace for it opens a person up to endless speculation and the acceptance of mystical experiences over the evidence of Scripture.

Relativism

Relativism is the buzzword of the day. This concept means truth is flexible and is constantly changing. People can base truth upon their subjective experience and what feels right to them. Every person can believe in his own set of values or belief system without condemning another person's values or beliefs. Therefore, whenever someone seeks the truth behind the experiences that others pass through, they are seen to be contentious, divisive, unloving, or unchristian. Today it's viewed as being all right to espouse any view you wish, but it is

never right to criticize another person's views no matter how unbiblical these views and claims might be. However, the Bible commands us to test all experiences and search the Scriptures to verify if they are genuine and according to Biblical revelation.

Today many evangelicals have made an idol out of tolerance (Rev. 2:20). They tolerate some error, unbiblical views regarding the Lord's return, and mystical or extrabiblical experiences that Charismatic and other people are claiming to have, which contradict truth and the way God expects us to live the normal Christian life.

One author concludes:

"When tolerance is valued above the truth, the truth always suffers. Church history shows this to be so. The times of decline in the history of the church have always been marked by a tolerant spirit which ultimately leads to carelessness, worldliness, doctrinal compromise, and great confusion in the church."

The church has gone adrift on the sea of subjectivity. A paradigm shift has occurred. There is a new call for a new generation to shift from an objective approach to God's truth, to an almost entirely subjective or experiential approach. However, to abandon and replace the objective view of Scripture with a more subjective view leaves you very vulnerable to error and deception.

Ephesians 4:14 says:

"That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (teaching), by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"

The word "sleight" literally means "dice playing." Metaphorically it speaks of the deception of men because dice players sometimes cheated and defrauded their fellow players. Dear friend, unless fundamental Bible believing churches continue to take a unified stand in "the faith" (Eph. 4:13), we will be blown out into the sea of mysticism. The winds of false teachings and extra-biblical experiences are being widely embraced and are becoming acceptable to churches, which once shunned these experiences.

One Baptist preacher said:

“My own nephew drowned once as a child and was resuscitated. He later was able to describe in unbelievable detail the folks and events involved in his resuscitation. He said afterwards, ‘I looked down and saw them.’ Who am I to say there was nothing to it? Not me, brother.”

Today believers are jettisoning the clear teachings and conclusions of the Bible over the experiences that children and other people have had. As a result, many are being swept further and further out into the sea of mystical experiences. But “What saith the scripture?” (Romans 4:3). What does the Bible, the final authority, have to say about these types of experiences? Are they legitimate and true experiences based upon what the Bible says? Let’s investigate.

Clinical and Biblical Death



What is death? There are two kinds of death. There is death from a medical viewpoint and death from a Biblical viewpoint. From the medical viewpoint, doctors claim that death has occurred when there is the absence of certain detectable signs, such as the heart stopping, blood pressure being so low that it is unreadable, or the body temperature so low that death is a certainty. However, from the Biblical viewpoint, death occurs when the spirit of a person leaves or

departs from the body, without any possibility of returning to the body. This is because a person dies only once; therefore, their spirit can only leave their body once. We will verify this later in our study.

James 2:26 gives the Biblical definition of death:

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

According to the Bible, death occurs when the spirit actually leaves the human body. What the medical field terms as death is not death. There are plenty of people, who were thought to be dead from a medical standpoint (they code blue), but they were revived and are alive today. These people were dead from a medical standpoint but they were not dead from a Biblical standpoint. Their spirit did not actually leave their body. Of course, many will argue that their spirit did leave their body during their “near death” experience, since they sensed they were floating around the operating room and witnessed the doctors and surgeons working on their body.

Roaming Spirits

The Bible teaches that when a person dies in the Biblical sense, the spirit of that person actually leaves the body immediately and then enters the next abode of life, which is life in Heaven or hell (Hades). The Bible teaches that when the human spirit leaves the human body it does not have any possibility of return. This Biblical conclusion will help us understand that whatever is happening to people, who claim to have these near death experiences, is not true Biblical death. It's some other experience unrelated to death. It's an experience that has occurred while the human spirit was still residing in the human body. Therefore, it becomes obvious that people who were revived, after having these near death experiences, had not actually died in the Biblical sense; rather, they had been in an unconscious state or condition.

Biblical death occurs when the spirit departs from the human body and never again returns to the body. If the spirit leaves the body, there is no possibility of return. The Old Testament revelation supports this conclusion. A person dies in the Biblical sense when the spirit of that person departs and never again returns to the body. Any

other claims of spirits leaving and returning to bodies are not true encounters with death. They are pseudo-death. Death has not actually occurred.

Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 reveals:

“Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then (after death occurs) shall the dust (the body made out of clay) return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (the real person) shall return unto God who gave it.”

Solomon correctly observes that when a person dies their spirit immediately returns under the custody of God and He then places that spirit in the place of its own choosing. The spirit of a person immediately comes under the control of the Creator at the time of death as it prepares to depart into the next life. The Bible never mentions about the human spirit floating around in some kind of limbo state in the afterlife. The spirit “returns” to God and not to the operating room, or the scene of a car accident, in order to reenter the body. It returns to God and the journey is over. If the spirit can return to the human body, as so many claim, then the death was a hoax. It was not true death.

I once shared this verse with a cultist who was at my door. She was trying to use the book of Ecclesiastes to prove that a person dies like a dog, or that a person’s soul and spirit ceases to exist after death. I took her to this verse, which clearly reveals that Solomon believed in the existence of the human spirit in the afterlife. The spirit of a person immediately returns into the hands of the Creator at the time of death.

The Biblical revelation concludes that there is no possibility of the spirit floating around in a state of limbo, or spending time in the operating room, after leaving the human body. The spirit immediately returns into the controlling hands of the Creator following death to be dispensed in the place of its choosing. In addition, the Bible never suggests that the body leaves its destiny in the afterlife and returns once again to earth.

The New Testament leads us to the same conclusion.

Philippians 1:23-24 says:

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.”

In this verse, Paul is clearly talking about born again Christians, who are saved and ready to meet the Lord when they die. Did you catch what Paul reveals to us under the inspiration of God? The Bible says that the born again human spirit departs from the human body to immediately be with Christ in Heaven. In other words, when the human spirit leaves our body, we are immediately ushered into the presence of the Lord.

The revelation of Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments does not allow for a human spirit to leave the body, float around an operating room, roam about through tunnels, or experience other spiritual phenomenon, before entering Heaven. The Bible is clear on this matter of death; we “depart ... to be with Christ.” It does not say we depart from our body and witness ourselves being operated on by surgeons, or we depart from our body and find ourselves moving through a dark tunnel or tunnel of light.

In addition, Paul is obviously teaching that when his human spirit did leave his body, he did not expect his spirit to return to earth in order to reenter his body. Actually, he did not want to leave his body knowing that he would leave behind his friends on earth that needed him. Paul is actually saying that he was between a rock and a hard place. I want to die and immediately go home to be with the Lord, but at the same time, he knew that he was needed here on earth to help the saints (“needful for you”). Once again, we can conclude that Paul was looking forward to the immediate departure of his spirit into the presence of the Lord. If he was not on earth, then he would be in Heaven. Someday our regenerated spirit will leave this old worn out body behind and make a beeline for Glory!

“Some glad morning when this life is o'er,
I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away!”

What a day it will be!

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 gives more revelation on the subject:

“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.”

Whenever you see the word “Therefore” you must determine what it’s therefore. Paul links these verses to what was previously stated about the reassurance of our future resurrection and the eternal body we will possess someday (“eternal in the heavens” – 1 Cor. 5:1). In these verses, we see the reoccurring word “confidence,” which means Paul was persuaded that he would someday be present with Jesus Christ in Heaven, with a new glorified body. We too can have this blessed hope!

The expression “at home in the body” (2 Cor. 5:6) means to dwell in the earthly tent – our body (2 Cor. 5:1), which is presently humiliating (“naked” and “unclothed” – 2 Cor. 5:3-4 with Phil. 3:20), outwardly wasting away (2 Cor. 4:16), and remains in a state of mortality away from the immediate presence of the Lord (“absent from the Lord” – 2 Cor. 5:6; see also 1 Cor. 13:12).

Paul’s point is clear. While we reside in our present earthly bodies, we are not in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who resides in Heaven. In light of this, the translators remind us that we need to walk by faith instead of by sight (vs. 7). Of course, when we look at our present bodies they are a sight to behold! Nevertheless, when we walk by faith, we know that we will get a new body someday, be delivered from all of our earthly pains and problems, and see Jesus Christ face to face. This is brought out in the next verse.

Paul says we can be “confident,” or persuaded, that when we are “absent from the body” (2 Cor. 5:8), we will be immediately “present with the Lord” in Heaven. This could be achieved through one of two ways: by death and our entrance into Heaven (Phil. 1:21-23), or by the return of Christ and our translation into Heaven (1 Thess. 2:19). Actually both are true; however, the confidence and anticipated joy of seeing the Savior in the Rapture, immediately receiving a new body, and entering his eternal state seems to be in Paul’s thinking.

It seems that Paul looked forward to someday being “present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8) either by death or Rapture. Ultimately, he longed to be clothed with the new body (1 Cor. 5:4) and be with Christ forever in the eternal state – his heavenly home (1 Cor. 5:1). One thing is certain; Paul never taught that the spirit would float or roam around between death or at the time when Jesus returns for His children. Only one thing would occur - “absent from the body and present with the Lord.”

This is something we must claim for our own personal lives as well. Death brings us into the immediate presence of the Lord. Blessed noonday promise! The Bible never teaches there is an intermediate state where the spirit roams about prior to entering the Lord’s presence. The moment we die, in the Biblical sense, when the spirit leaves our human body, we open our eyes in the presence of the Lord.

“When my lifework is ended, and I cross the swelling tide,
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see;
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
And redeemed by His side I shall stand,
I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
By the print of the nails in His hand.”

In John 3:13 Jesus said:

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven (no person ever has ascended to Heaven and come back), but he that came down from heaven (incarnation), even the Son of man which is in heaven.”

In this context (John 2:12) Jesus is saying that no person has actually died, gone to Heaven, and come back to give out spiritual information or divine truth. The one exception is Jesus who is the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13; Matt. 26:64). Jesus is the “Ladder” between Heaven and earth with access to both realms. After eternally existing with His Father in Heaven, He “descended” in the Incarnation and then “ascended” in the Ascension. And someday He is going to return to earth again in His Second Coming. This means that Jesus is the only

heavenly messenger that knows the divine teachings which we need for our personal lives. His established authority, living eternally as the Son of God in Heaven, descending in the incarnation, and ascending back to Heaven authenticates His teachings.

Once again, this means that no child or any person has ever died, gone to Heaven, and come back from the afterlife to give us spiritual information. Only the eternal Son of God has come down from Heaven to give us the spiritual truths that we need to believe, know, and live by on a daily basis.

John 1:18

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Can Jesus make it any clearer? People don't die, go to Heaven, see God, and then return to earth to declare what He is like (2 Cor. 5:18; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 9:27). The only person who has done this is Jesus. He has unfolded to us what God is like in His eternal being and given us revelation about the Father (John 14:10). Anybody who makes the accusations and claims of seeing God in Heaven is not giving us the truth. They are under the influence of what we term the figment of their own human imagination, which involves dreams, hallucinations, false memories, fantasies or even lies. Or else they are deceived by demons. Satan is always trying to deceive the world by false information of the afterlife (2 Cor. 11:14). Let us never forget this.

People of all ages in their altered state of consciousness, as they hover between death and life, can find themselves in a condition where their mind goes blank. As a result, they can become open to outside input from the spiritual world (a world outside the realm of our own physical world). Demons, whose goal it is to undermine the Word of God and deceive mankind about the afterlife, can very easily program the mind by revealing information to these people, even prior information which they did not know (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 11:3). Some of the information is false and others is true. Of course, all of this information given by “seducing spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1) is designed to deceive people and keep them from following the Bible, God's standard of truth. We must stop following the pseudo experiences of those who bypass God's absolute standard of truth. Jesus told us to

not believe those who claim to have seen Him (“believe it not” - Matt. 24:26).

The language of all the texts observed above, reveal that when a person enters Heaven they are not coming back. Once again, Paul is clearly teaching that when his human spirit leaves his present earthly body, he did not expect to return to earth in order to reenter his old worn out body. He was looking forward to being with the Lord and being forever released from the humiliation and hardships connected with the present earthly body he possessed. In short, there was no operating room experience, no tunnel to pass through, and no river to cross. Absent from the body and immediately present with the Lord. Paul’s departure from his old earthly body was viewed as a permanent departure – not a temporary departure and return. Absent from the body and present with the Lord! It does not get any clearer than this.

Someone said:

“There are only two places the Christian can be: in the body or with the Lord.”

This is Biblical and a comforting reality to our hearts today. The Bible verifies that the regenerated spirit of a person is either within the present body or it departs into the presence of the Lord. You are either at home in the body or at home with the Lord. There is no in-between state that occurs where the spirit roams about outside the realm of Heaven. The “near death” experience is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. This is why we must reject “out of body” experiences, which claim the human spirit leaves the body, passes through mystical experiences, and then returns to the body again. The Bible reveals that the spirit of a saved individual immediately passes into the presence of the Lord to dwell with Him forever. This is what occurs in the event of true, Biblical death and dying.

Luke 16:22-23 also reveals that following death the spirit of a person does not roam about. In this case, it is the spirit of an unsaved person. “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.”

Please notice once again that there was no intermediate state, where the spirit of the rich man roamed about in a state of limbo. There was death and the next thing he knew was hell! His eyes were opened in the place called Hades. There were no second chances, no out-of-body-experiences, and no opportunity for return.

We must observe that this man’s departed spirit could not return to planet earth, once he was dead and his spirit entered Hades, the place of suffering. Jesus says, “neither can they pass to us” (Luke 16:26), or return to those people who are living on earth. We must understand that when a person dies and his spirit is separated from his body, he cannot return to that body and come back to his earthly existence. Jesus says that this is impossible. No person can go to Heaven or the afterlife and then return.

I was recently listening to a testimony of a man who claimed he had died and went to hell. He said that he was a believer. That startles me. I could not figure out why God would send a believer to hell! Anyway, he shared the experience he had while in hell. His testimony was that he was taken to hell in order to experience God’s judgment and he was then sent back in order to testify of the truthfulness of hell and warn others to believe in Christ and not go there. Beloved, do not believe these extrabiblical experiences which contradict what Jesus and the Bible taught regarding death. When you die, you are not coming back! No person can return from the afterlife. Your destiny is sealed. More on this later.

We discover that Biblical revelation does not validate “near death” experiences as reflecting truth regarding the death experience. We must discredit these “near death” experiences as being unbiblical and therefore something other than Biblical death. These experiences are sham experiences and pseudo tales. In short, whatever is occurring with these people is not Biblical death, since in Biblical death the spirit departs the human body and never returns.

The Great Gulf

Luke 16:22 says:

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom:”

Jesus taught that when people die they immediately enter the place of their choosing. When this saved man died, his spirit did not float around; it was immediately escorted by the angels into Paradise, which at this time was at the center of the earth. This place was called “Abraham’s bosom” since Abraham went to this place for his faith or belief in the Lord (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). As a result, Abraham became the leading figure of faith within the Old Testament and the compartment of “sheol,” where he departed to after his death, became named after him.

Today “sheol” no longer exists as a place of residency for God’s saints. This compartment of Sheol or Hades has been emptied after Christ’s resurrection (Eph. 4:8) and now God’s children enter Heaven immediately at the time of death (Heb. 12:22-23; 2 Cor. 12:2) and the place that Christ has prepared for His Church (John 14:1-3). In this incident, we discover that the angels escorted Abraham safely to the other side. We may not know all that happens in that short lapse of time, between our death and entrance into Heaven, but we do know that we will get there safely. Satan cannot harm us. We are God’s children.

Romans 8:38-39

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The Lord will see to it that we are taken safely home to dwell with Him forever, even as the angels escorted Abraham into Sheol. We will not be rerouted to hell, or left in a state of limbo to float around, or be temporarily placed in Purgatory. We are going straight to Heaven! No devil or demon will keep us from the place God has prepared for us!

There is another side to this account of the afterlife. It deals with the rich man who was unsaved.

Luke 16:23

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

The rich man, who was unsaved, died and immediately entered the place called Hades, which is a compartment of terrible judgment and suffering for the unsaved of all the ages. Please notice that this man’s spirit did not roam about. It was immediately ushered into Hades. And in hell there was the horror of an eternally damned spirit that could sense pain, agony, and experience great suffering!

Luke 16:24-25 records these frightening words:

“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.”

Hell is no joke. Hell is not just a curse word. Hell is a real place where unsaved people enter when they die. Our hearts should be deeply burdened for those who die without salvation and eternal life. There is an awful fate that awaits them in the next life. This is why we are to “go” (Mark 16:15) with the Gospel. People need the Lord!

Jesus once again says in Luke 16:26:

“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.”

Abraham and the rich man could not change places. Once they were in the place of their choosing there was no escape. The Bible teaches that God has His lines which cannot be crossed. Death is one line that people cannot cross over for there is “a great gulf fixed.” What was true of “Hades” prior to the resurrection of Christ is also true today, regarding death and a person’s entrance into Heaven or hell.

Once your spirit leaves your body and you die, there is no chance to change your destination or return to your present body on earth. The rich man could not pass over the great gulf that divided him from Abraham. He could not move back and forth at will once he had died. A person's destiny is sealed after their death ("they which would pass from hence to you cannot"). In other words, there is no movement of the human spirit from the realm of the afterlife nor is there any second chance after death has occurred. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Jesus taught that a person can never come back to earth, since He said, "neither can they pass to us." Once death has taken place, a person's destiny is fixed.

God has set boundaries that no person can cross over after they die! The boundaries surrounding the next life are sealed by God. Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:18) and once a person dies, his spirit is locked into that place until the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:22-23). The idea that people can go to hell or Heaven and then be released to come back and tell about their journey, experience, or something that Jesus said to them, is totally unscriptural! Death is a boundary and barrier that no human spirit can cross over. There are no returns! When you enter the afterlife, your spirit is locked into that place of existence forever. The great gulf cannot be crossed.

There is no coming back my friend! When you are gone you are gone! You will be in judgment forever or you will be in the blessing of God's presence forever! We must therefore conclude that when a person dies in the true Biblical sense, they never have the authority, or ability, to pass in and out of their abode, within Heaven or hell. God has designed that when the spirit departs from the body there can be no possibility of return to this present life. This truth alone should discredit all the stories, which people share, who supposedly have entered Heaven or hell, and then returned to tell about their experience.

Coming Back

The Bible clearly reveals that dead people cannot come back to this earth, enter their body, and resume their lives. They cannot return and resume their normal earthly activities after experiencing Biblical death.

Job 7:9-10 records:

“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no *more*. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”

The word grave in the Old Testament is actually translated “sheol.” The context will determine whether or not the word is referring to the grave for the human body or the actual place of departed spirits. The reference to “sheol” in this verse may actually be applicable to either the grave for the body or the place of departed spirits. It may be that Job had the actual place of departed spirits in his mind, as he wrote, “He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”

Whatever Job was conveying, the verse seems to suggest that a person cannot return from the afterlife and know what is taking place upon earth. There is no chance for Job, or any of us, to move back into this world, after we have died. There is no opportunity for people to once again regain knowledge of what is taking place in this present world. This means that the departed spirit of a person does not have the capability to move back into the body and back to earth, or this present existence of life, after it leaves the body. Once the spirit departs to its destination, there is no possibility of return.

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 also verifies this:

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing (about things in this present life), 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 (they never again have anything to do with their earthly experiences).

Here is Solomon’s observation, which by the way, is actually true. He is not teaching soul sleep as the cults assume. What is recorded here is actually true. When a person dies, they do not know what is going on upon planet earth. They certainly know what is occurring in the place where their spirit had gone (Luke 16); however, they do not know what is taking place on this earth any longer. All the empty things that Solomon tried (those things “under the sun”) would no longer be known or experienced by the person who dies. This is

because their spirit departs and has no present knowledge of the circumstances and happenings upon planet earth.

This truth suggests that the spirit of a person does not float around in a state of limbo after death and then return to the body to resume one's life again. The Biblical record is clear. The spirit of a person has no idea what is taking place on earth. The spirit departs into another place of existence (Heaven or hell) and this excludes the spirit from knowing what is occurring in this present life.

Over the years, I have had many people ask me if their loved ones, who have gone on to be with the Lord, can actually see them living their life here on earth. They wonder if their lost loved one can see the beautiful flowers that they have placed beside their grave. We must conclude Biblically that departed loved ones cannot witness the events of this life. They cannot see the events of this world taking place.

The whole idea that the spirits of departed loved ones are sitting in the grandstands of Heaven watching us live out our lives on earth is not Scriptural. The epistle of Hebrews is not suggesting this concept either, when it speaks of the "great cloud of witnesses" surrounding us (Hebrews 12:1). This text is looking back to the great martyred heroes of faith in chapter eleven, who have gone on before us. In one sense, these people are memorialized and we can view or witness them today, as great people of faith. They are not witnessing us; we are witnessing them! We are to look at their past lives and see the testimony and legacy of faith which they have left behind. What kind of legacy will you leave behind?

Here is the point; if departed saints can view the events of earth, then Heaven would no longer be Heaven. It would be earth in Heaven. I don't want any earth in Heaven. I want only Heaven!

The testimony of Scripture is clear on the matter of death.

Isaiah 8:20

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

When the testimonies and experiences of people do not reflect the sacred record of truth, we can be sure that these people have not experienced death and they lack true light or revelation. Whatever experience they have had was not a genuine death experience.

It's either the testimony of Scripture or the testimony of men. Of course, the testimony of the Word of God must be believed over the testimonies of children, men, and money-making charlatans. Those who claim they have actually died, whose spirits leave their bodies, float above operating tables, pass through tunnels, witness beings of light, and whose spirits go to Heaven or hell and then return to their bodies to resume life on earth are not giving Biblical conclusions regarding death. Their experiences are not supported by the Bible. The Bible does not validate these experiences as being genuine experiences that are related to death; therefore, they are not from God. Biblically, there is no possibility of return, after the spirit departs from the human body. A person's destiny and destination is sealed after death.

One Death

There are only two men who have cheated death – Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). Another group will cheat death, which is the Church. Living believers at Christ's return will someday be raptured away without dying (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:17). However, these are rare exceptions to the rule that God has established which is for a person to die only once.

Hebrews 9:27 declares: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" The Bible declares what the normal process would be for the billions upon billions people who have been born on earth. Their experience would all be similar – they die only once. The Bible clearly teaches that a person is designed to die only once and afterward they pass into their next existence of life. For the unsaved individual, there is the inevitable and immediate consequence of judgment, following death.

The unsaved will not float around the operating room and experience peace and rest as so many have declared. They will experience the immediate judgment of God! Their human spirit is immediately

ushered into the fires of hell. You can mark this down as coming from the infallible book!

The Bible dogmatically asserts that you will die only once. You cannot die, have your spirit reenter your body again, and come back to life. Let us not be fooled by these alleged out-of-body experiences. Dying once has been the general rule for all mankind.

There have been very *rare exceptions* of people who were raised from the dead by a miraculous act of Jesus Christ. There was Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), Lazarus (John 11) and the multitude who were brought back to life at Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:51-53). Apparently our Lord brought these people back to life, while He was dwelling upon earth and seeking to prove His Messianic claims and deity. Again, these were *rare exceptions* to the general rule of a person experiencing death only once.

John 20:30-31 says:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Christ is not raising people from the dead today in order to prove His deity and authenticate His name as He did while living upon earth. He has already confirmed His divinity by all the miracles He did (“But these are written”) while He was present on earth. All the miraculous things written about Him in the Bible give ample proof of His deity. Therefore, we don't need miracles to verify Christ's credentials.

We also know that Peter and Paul also raised several dead people. In Acts 9:36-42, Peter raised Tabitha and in Acts 20:9-12, Paul raised Eutychus. This man went asleep while Paul was preaching and fell out of the loft. It pays to listen to the preacher! Of course, the apostles were granted the “gifts of healing” (1 Cor. 12:9) since they were God's special agents (2 Cor. 12:12) who witnessed Christ in His resurrection body (Acts 1:22, 2:32, 3:15, 4:33, 5:32, 10:39-41, 13:30-31; I Corinthians 9:1, 15:7-8). These healing gifts even extended to the ability of raising the dead. The apostles were specially chosen

men that were given miraculous gifts of healing to prove that their apostleship was genuine and that their words came from God.

Mark 16:20 records:

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

The miraculous sign gifts were temporarily bestowed upon these special men to verify their call, as the unique apostles of Christ, and to verify that through them the New Testament revelation came. The miracles verified both the man and the message. The few restorations by Jesus and the apostles actually reversed “irreversible death” to prove the genuineness of these people and their words.

We must understand that Jesus is no longer on earth trying to prove His deity, nor are the apostles here on earth giving out the Word of God, since we have the completed canon of Scripture today (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18). Therefore, the Bible teaches that apostles and the early apostolic gifts of sign miracles have ceased and are no longer needed in the later Church era (1 Cor. 13:8-10). These miraculous sign gifts have served their purpose and are no longer operative in the Church.

Here is the point; all of these instances of people being brought back to life were *rare and extremely uncommon* occasions when the normal experience of dying “only once” was not followed. These people actually died twice. However, as the general rule, the Bible declares that when a person dies, they die only once. This is always true today, since there are no genuine apostles on earth that are raising the dead, proving their apostleship, and since Jesus is no longer on earth performing miracles and proving His deity.

Hebrews 9:27

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

True death, according to the Bible, does not allow for the spirit of a person to float around, experience tunnels and beings of light, and then return to its body. Again, there is an immediate judgment upon the unsaved human spirit when death occurs. The Word of God is

clear when it states - “after this.” These words imply immediate judgment upon the lost after true, Biblical death has occurred. There is no lapse of time, no serene or peaceful feelings, and no second chance. It’s straight to hell. And if you die without Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are going straight to hell.

It’s interesting that most reports dealing with out of body experiences normally eliminate reports about hell. It does not matter if the people were Hindus, Buddhists or Dr. George Ritchie. This man is a psychiatrist and Presbyterian, who had an “out of body” experience. He reported that it changed his conventional views on Heaven and Hell.

He says:

“I saw no hell-fire, no heads rolling in the streets. I know beyond a doubt that the Christ I saw will accept everyone, good or bad, even those who didn’t believe in him.”

I wonder which Christ he witnessed. It was not the true Christ of the Bible! The Scriptures conclude that when a person dies in the Biblical sense, their spirit immediately is ushered into the next life. There is no wandering spirits floating around in a state of limbo. The human spirit is not given the authority or privilege by God to roam about outside the boundaries of Heaven or hell. Furthermore, there is no human spirit that can actually go to Heaven or hell and then be given the opportunity to return to their human body and experience life on earth again. Let God be true and every man a liar - “After this the judgment.”

Dreams, Visions, and Experiences



There are certain people, who make light of some experiences that only several Bible characters have had, in order to try and contradict the clearly revealed teaching of the Scriptures on life after death. We know of only three people, from Scripture, who were privileged to see Heaven.

They were Stephen, the apostle Paul, and John. Many will conclude that if these men died and went to Heaven, so can they. In other words, they can also pass through a “near death” experience, see Heaven, and then return to their bodies. Of course, this is a silly observation and conclusion that is not based upon the record or facts of Scripture.

First, just because a Biblical character had an experience does not mean that everyone can have the same experience. For instance, I have fed traveling evangelists and Bible teachers, but I do not expect God to restock my food supply as He did for the widow of Zarephath in I Kings 17:8-16. Now, God could miraculously stock all of our homes with food, but this is not a normal experience for today. Leprosy patients do not dip seven times in a river to be cured (II Kings 5:1-14). Nor do we throw sticks on the ground and expect them to turn into serpents as Moses did in Exodus 4:2-3.

We must understand that not everything you read about during Bible times is necessarily the *normal* occurrence for our lives today. The fact that God used Elijah, Elisha, and Peter to restore life to people (I Kings 17:17-23; II Kings 4:17-37; Acts 9:36-43) does not mean God intends for believers today to raise others from the dead. Jesus’ command to the twelve to raise the dead does not mean He gave the command to every Christian (Matthew 10:8).

McQuilkin has correctly observed:

“That an event was reported to have truly happened does not necessarily make it a revelation of God’s universal will.”

Second, all of the men mentioned above, Stephen, the apostle Paul, and John, were alive (not dead) when they were given a glimpse of the wonders of Heaven. This is something that many people miss in these passages of Scripture. The experiences of these men were not “near death” experiences; they were experiences that took place before death had occurred. We will review their experiences later.

Third, the apostolic gifts and revelatory experiences of trances and visions were limited to the primary apostles and their close associates, such as Barnabas, Stephen, and Philip (Acts 8:5-8). Fourth, the experiences of these men confirmed truth, prior to the

canonization of Scripture, during the initial expansion and outreach of the Church (Heb. 2:4). Their experiences confirmed truth; not our experiences today.

It must be observed that even during the infant days of the church and early New Testament record, there are very few occasions when God spoke through revelatory trances and dreams or through means of miraculous revelation (Acts 9:10, 9:12, 10:3, 10:10; II Corinthians 12:1; Revelation 1:9-10). To hear modern charismatic Christians talk, one would think visions and trances were common-place during the Bible and New Testament. Actually they were rare in past history and today God no longer chooses to speak this way. There are only a few instances in history when God supernaturally revealed truth to people through these methods of communication.

Dreams and visions, these types of experiences, were part of the pre-canon days of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. They occurred rarely but occasionally, in order to reveal truth to God's special prophets, prior to the days when the Biblical revelation in both Old and New Testaments would be completed.

Dreams and trances were used to reveal information to the apostles during the time when God's new revelation was being formed. They were given at a certain climactic point of history to enable the writers to record Scripture (Rev. 1:10) and confirm new truth or revelation that was being shared for New Testament living (Acts 10:9-16).

Larry Pettegrew once said:

"We must not make the tragic spiritual and doctrinal mistake of teaching the experience of the apostles instead of experiencing the teaching of the apostles."

Since God has now completed His Word (1 Cor. 13:10 – "that which is perfect is come") there is no more need to direct anyone through dreams or visions or give out any additional information ("the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" – Jude 3). Today we do not have to rely on dreams, visions, and other mystical experiences, such as near death experiences, to confirm truth. God reassures us of His truth and assistance for living, through the promises of His Word (2 Pet. 1:4; Col. 1:9-10; 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and the Holy

Spirit, who applies the Word to our lives (1 John 2:20; 1 Cor. 2:12; John 16:13 – “he will guide you into all truth” – not in dreams, visions, or any mystical experience). Instead of seeking reassurance and direction through the supernatural, we should seek God’s guidance and wisdom through His unfailing Word.

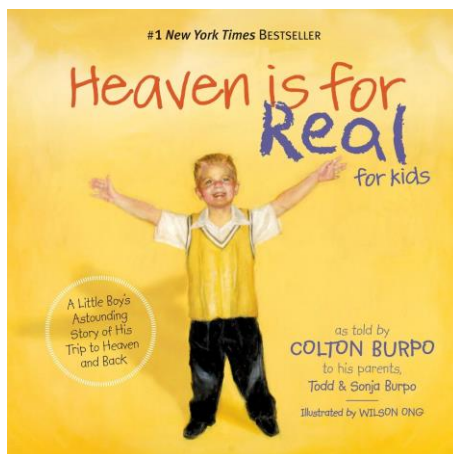
Psalm 119:105

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

God is not revealing messages or truth today through trances, dreams, visions, prophecies, or any other apostolic experience, since we have a completed Bible and possess the “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19-21) which was “once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). During this present time period God is not dispensing new revelation through dreams and visions by prophets. The canon is closed! We live in an era of closed revelation, which was true for a large segment of people, throughout the history of mankind.

Heaven Encounters

Today, there is no lack of books being published by those who say they have seen Heaven. I remember the book “I Saw Heaven.” It was published in the 90’s. Recently, many similar books have made a big hit such as “Ninety-Minutes in Heaven” by Don Piper and other titles like “Twenty-Three Minutes in Hell.” All of these have topped best-seller lists. There will be many more to follow in the train. Christians eat these up since it would seem that these experiences confirm for them the reality of their faith. Not only this, Christians will hand them out to unbelieving friends, so they can say to them, “I told you so” and offer the experience as the proof of their faith.



The latest book (the New York Times best seller list) is called “Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back.” It was written by Todd Burpo, the father of a boy who supposedly went to Heaven during his surgery and then returned to tell the story.

The four-year old boy, Colton, during a surgery, claims that he visited Heaven for a short period of time. He then returns to his body and over the months and years that follow tells his parents about his time in heaven. Let me give you a quick low-down on the parts of the story about heaven that stood out to me most.

- He sat in Jesus' lap.
- He saw Jesus riding a rainbow-colored horse.
- He met his sister who died in his mother's womb (whom his parents had never told him about).
- He saw John the Baptist.
- There is a coming battle with Satan.
- There are thousands of colors we have never seen.
- He met his great granddad (who told him things about his father that his father had never told him).
- He saw Jesus' marks on his hands and feet.
- All the people had wings of various sizes (including Colton) and everyone flew around (except Jesus who moved up and down as if on an escalator).
- Jesus had the most beautiful eyes, a beard, a white gown, a purple sash, and a crown.
- All the people had a light above their head (halo?).
- Jesus sits on a throne at the right hand of God and Gabriel is on the left.
- He sat by God the Holy Spirit (who he could not describe) and explained to his dad that God is a Trinity.
- It never gets dark in heaven because God the Father and God the Son are the lights.
- There were all kinds of animals everywhere.
- Nobody is old in heaven and no one wears glasses.
- Jesus "shoots" power down from heaven to his earthly father, a Wesleyan minster, while he is preaching.
- The gates to heaven were made of gold and pearls.
- He was actually only there for three minutes.

Discerning Christians who "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14) should be able to read these things and know that they are not accurate descriptions of Heaven. Where do we find that everyone has wings in Heaven? Where do we find

that Jesus shoots down power from Heaven to individuals? Where do we find Gabriel sitting at the left hand of God?

You must understand there have been tens of thousands of “I saw heaven” claims out there. The most famous of which is Emanuel Swedenborg’s (1688-1772), father of the cult Swedenborgianism. He claimed to have been given permission to freely visit heaven and hell for 28 years. His testimony is filled with unorthodox beliefs, not the least of which was a denial of the Trinity.

Today, studies of near-death experiences are on the rise and becoming more accepted. The International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS) has gathered over 900 accounts with 280 of these just coming last year! These experiences are very nice when they parallel with what you already believe. The problem is that these experiences are not only being shared by Christians, but Muslims, atheists, Hindus, and those of every faith. Each account has its own unique testimony that fits well within their own religious beliefs. For instance, Muslim’s see virgins, Mormons are comforted by Joseph Smith, Catholics are aided by Mary, and even atheists are found being drawn by a bright light down a long tunnel. These findings should raise a red flag regarding these “near death” experiences.

Peter Kreeft says he died and went to Heaven. His book opens up with him surfing in California and he gets turned over by a wave, hits bottom, and has an out-of-body experience. He goes to Heaven. And when he goes to Heaven he's amazed to find Buddha and asks: "What in the world are you doing in heaven?" I mean, Buddhism is not Christianity. What are you doing? Buddha says, "Well, you know, I was in to contemplation, I was into peace and I was into tranquility and what I didn't know about Jesus God sorted out when I arrived."

And then he went a little further and he ran into Mohammed and he said, "What are you doing here? You just believe Jesus is another one of the prophets like Mohammed. What are you doing here, how did you get here?" And he said, "Well, we were into morality." And Mohammed says, "What I didn't know about Jesus, God straightened [me] out when I arrived."

And he goes a little further and he comes across some Jews who didn't believe in Jesus either but they were worshiping the true God, the God of the Old Testament and that was good enough for God because they were worshiping Him, the true God. And what they didn't know about Jesus they found out when they arrived in Heaven.

Next he ran into a group of atheists. And the atheists were searching for truth, and since God is truth they were really searching for God and that was good enough for God."

While history abounds with many accounts of people who have allegedly gone to Heaven, through "out of body" or "near death" experiences, Dr. Collette's is unlike many of the testimonies. Collette gives many details of his journey in Heaven and his accounts are very strange and peculiar. He said: "Everything God created on the earth is in Heaven, Horses, cats, dogs. Everything that He created on earth is in Heaven, in the way of animals, only these are perfect. For example, the dogs don't bark."

Further, he says, "You don't need plumbing. You can go to the Banqueting House and eat all you want and no plumbing is needed." Collette then describes the "Pity Department." The "Pity Department" is place the souls of aborted babies go and also some severely retarded babies and in here that these little souls are trained for a period of time before they go before the Throne of God.

Then he claims he saw the "Record Room," an immense area where all to idle words spoken by Christians are being retained until after Christians give an account of them or are judged, at which time these will be emptied into the "Sea of Forgetfulness." Collette then describes the "Garment Room," where angels are sewing our robes, and Mansions are under construction. And he found the "Holy Ghost Elevator" and many other astonishing sights.

He adds one more detail, "While I was traveling back to earth, I saw two girls, one brunette and one a redhead. We stopped to talk to them, that is their 'soul bodies' on the way back. We had asked them what had happen to them? And they indicated that they had gotten killed in a car accident on the California Highway and their physical

bodies were in a funeral home. They said their mother was weeping over them, so would I please tell her they were ok?"

Dr. Collette feels that he has conclusive proof to verify his journey. "About a year later I went to that area where the mother lived and was giving this testimony, a mother jumped up in the congregation and said that's a description of my daughters! I told her she shouldn't fret, that her daughters are in that wonderful place, we saw them on the way to Heaven." She said, "She would never cry again."

After Dr. Collette lectured on Heaven to his third straight standing room audience in Montgomery, Alabama, he offered to take questions from the floor. The first question was interesting. A person stood up and asked, "I'm a Cowboy, will there be Rodeos in Heaven?" Dr. Collette was ready with an answer, "There are horses in Heaven, beautiful horses, they are all praising God, there is no foolishness in Heaven. I am not saying that a Rodeo is foolish, but there is no Will Rogers style acting up there."

These alleged trips or excursions to Heaven and back have become almost a common experience in the Charismatic Movement. People have been sharing these stories for many years. Way back on April 11, 1977, a Charismatic television network in Los Angeles carried an interview with Dr. Richard Eby, who claimed to have died, gone to Heaven, and come back again. According to Dr. Eby he fell off a balcony, struck his head and was supposedly dead.

He reported that he had experienced Paradise. Dr. Eby said he found some flowers, broke them off and noticed they had no water in their stems because Jesus is the Living Water. The aroma of Heaven was especially overwhelming with the sweet savor of sacrifices, Eby said. He discussed the fact that the human brain has twelve cranial nerves and then added that those twelve nerves represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Furthermore, he said that the number one nerve in God's cranium is the sense of smell. Eby said he learned that the whole purpose of sacrifice was to send a sweet aroma up to Heaven to satisfy God's main cranial nerve.

Of course, every discerning Christian (Heb. 5:14) would chuckle at this type of fanatical story because the discerning Christian knows

that it is farfetched and strange. However, Charismatics have no way to judge experience and they have no way to stop these kinds of stories from being authentic. They can't downplay these types of experiences because the system validates experience and truth rises from experience instead of the Bible. Therefore, many today try and use the Bible to fit their experience. As a result, they end up huckstering the Bible (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2).

How should we view all of these visitations to Heaven? Let God's Word give us the answer. 2 Peter 1:16 declares, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." Why are so many following these near death experiences? 2 Timothy 4:4 concludes: "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Standing on the Promises



Don Piper, who allegedly went to Heaven, insisted that he was called to be the minister of hope and bring faith to others by relating his experience to people. But if hope is to be found in any person, it will be found in the person of Christ (John 14:6) – not a man's experience. And what is faith? Faith is believing that what God has said in His Word is true. Our faith must rest upon the truth and promises of God (John

3:16; 5:24).

2 Corinthians 1:20

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

"Standing on the promises of Christ my King,
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,
Standing on the promises of God."

Don Piper, a Baptist pastor, speaks to others of his account of going to Heaven and coming back to earth. Returning home from a conference, Piper's car was crushed under the wheels of a truck. Medical personnel declared him dead at the scene of the accident. But ninety minutes after this accident, a pastor, waiting at the scene, was told by God to pray for the dead man. He did so, and Piper immediately returned to life. For the 90 minutes that his body lay lifeless inside the car, Piper claims to have been in Heaven. He now carries with him memories of paradise and in *90 Minutes in Heaven*, a book which has sold over 500,000 copies, he seeks to encourage other Christians with a description of our eternal home.

Piper again states:

"Because I was able to experience heaven," he says, "I was able to prepare [friends] for it. And now I am preparing you."

Since when does one need to die and go to Heaven in order to prepare others for this place? How can Piper prepare others for Heaven? People are prepared to go to Heaven by believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this present life (John 1:12). Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. Furthermore, our assurance about Heaven is based on the promises of Scripture and not the questionable experiences of men.

1 Peter 1:3-5

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

I live by the promises of God; not by the pseudo experiences of modern-day charlatans. I see no reason to believe that God wants us to know more about Heaven than He has revealed to us in His Word. An old hymn asks, "What more can he say than to you he has said?" Beloved, believe and live by the promises of God's Word – not the alleged experiences of people.

Another Jesus

Since we are to live by promises and not experiences, we do not need tales of Heaven, or stories of those who claim to have been there, or seen Jesus, to authenticate our faith and prove the Bible is true.

Jesus spoke about those who will claim to see Jesus during the end times through dreams, visions, and other experiences, such as “near death” experiences.

Matthew 24:26

“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”

Jesus tells us that we should not believe the reports that people give to us about seeing Him through dreams, visions, trances, and other alleged heavenly encounters. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever in His eternal being (Hebrews 13:8); therefore, it would be impossible to conclude that all of these meetings with Jesus are one and the same Jesus. The descriptions and conclusions of these alleged “Jesus encounters” do not portray the Jesus of the Bible. I believe that many of the individuals who go through near-death experiences actually encounter a counterfeit Christ, or as the Bible teaches, “another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4).

The “Jesus,” which is sometimes identified, as a being of light that is encountered in near-death experiences, typically teaches many of these people such things as:

- Death is good and is not to be feared.
- Sin is not a problem. In fact, this "Jesus" often responds to human sin and shortcomings with humor.
- There is no hell to worry about.
- All people are welcome to Heaven, regardless of whether one has placed faith in Christ.
- All religions are equally valid.

In view of the fact that these ideas clearly go against what the Biblical Jesus taught, I think we have good reason to conclude that this "Jesus" is in fact a lying spirit (1 Kings 22:21-22; John 8:44).

Not only do many see "another Jesus" in these near death encounters, they also come out of the experience with a lower view of Scripture. One person who had a near death experience concluded that "the Lord isn't interested in theology," and another said that God "didn't care about church doctrine at all." The true Christ of Scripture, however, is most certainly interested in correct doctrine (John 8:31-32).

Other individuals, particularly individuals affiliated with non-Christian religions, claim that the being of light was Buddha, or Krishna, or some other leader of a particular world religion. Once again, this should raise "red flags" in the minds of discerning Christians. Satan, the great counterfeiter, is seeking to keep people of ALL religions away from the true Christ of the Bible.

These kinds of reports about seeing Jesus, Heaven, and experiencing other out-of-body experiences should disturb discerning Christians. Just recently CBS had a recent special on the out-of-body experiences. Once again, both saved and unsaved people, secular people and atheists, have been experiencing the same things in these alleged near death experiences. They hover out of their bodies, see bygone loved ones, and pass through tunnels of light.

Beloved, our faith should not be built on "tabloid theology" which is nothing more than the experience of people; our faith should be built on the theology of God's Word. The Scriptures are our final and only infallible source of authority. Jesus said, "thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and "the scriptures cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Jesus did not place any authority on the experience of people but on the statements of the Bible.

One reviewer of the book ("Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back") commented in this way: "If you struggle believing what the Bible says, but learn to find security in the testimony of a toddler, well, I feel sorry for you. And I do not mean this in a condescending way. If God's Word is not

sufficient for you, if the testimony of his Spirit, given to believers, is not enough for you, you will not find any true hope in the unproven tales of a child. This hope may last for a moment, but it will not sustain you, it will not bless you, in those times when hope is waning and times are hard.

The Foundation of Faith

I will never hang my hat on the “near death” experiences and neither should any discerning Christian. Furthermore, we do not need stories about people, who have come back from the great beyond, to *confirm* our faith and we certainly don’t need these as the *foundation* of our faith. So, from an apologetics standpoint (defending the faith), please don’t hand this type of book out to your unbelieving friends. These experiences do not create genuine faith in the hearts of the unsaved.

Romans 10:17

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Faith is produced in the hearts of people by the Holy Spirit working through the Word; it is not produced through “out of body experiences” that other people claim to have. “Near death” experiences cannot produce either conviction or conversion in the hearts of the lost. None of these experiences will result in bringing confidence and faith in our hearts.

Jesus never taught that miracles and experiences, which defy the imagination, would produce faith or salvation in the hearts and lives of people. In Luke 16:27-31 Jesus recorded a dialogue between the rich man in hell and Abraham. “Then he said (the rich man), I pray thee therefore, father (Abraham), 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 (the rich man), Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said (Abraham) unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

The rich man was portrayed by Jesus to converse with Abraham. This was a literary device to prove the point that Jesus was making. Jesus portrayed the unsaved rich man in hell as becoming evangelistic! He wanted someone to be sent from the dead to tell his relatives about the reality of hell.

Jesus was obviously suggesting that the rich man symbolized the Pharisees. They wanted miraculous signs that they could use in order to compel people to believe in Him as the Messiah. But since they refused to believe the Scriptures, these same people would never believe any sign no matter how great the sign might be. Jesus proved His point. Just a short time later He raised a man from the dead, another man named Lazarus (John 11:38-44). The result was that the religious leaders began to plot more earnestly to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 11:45-53; 12:10-11).

Miracles don't make people believe on Jesus. Signs and wonders and trips to Heaven and back don't make people believe, they never did. If a man does not believe the Word, he is not going to believe some experience.

Does the Scripture validate experience as the proper source for truth?

2 Peter 1:18 says:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables (trips to Heaven and back), when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

In essence, Peter said, "I had an experience, I saw the glorified Christ in a preview of His Second Coming. I saw the Shekinah Glory shining through Him, I heard the voice of God saying, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.'" I'm sure Peter could make a career today just going around telling that experience. But look what he says, verse 19, "But we have a more sure word of prophecy." We have the even surer prophetic word is the proper translation. Peter was talking about the Scriptures which are to be the foundation and constant bedrock of truth.

2 Peter 1:19

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

Peter declared, after having his Mount of Transfiguration experience, that the Word of God was “a more sure word of prophecy” (the prophetic revelation of God’s Word). Although his experience was genuine, being an apostle, he placed the Word of God above His experience.

What is “more sure” than a person’s experience? It’s the Word of God! Peter’s point is the main issue that Charismatics and those who accept “near death” experiences fail to understand. The truth of the Word of God must be placed above every experience. Peter says, “I had an experience, a real one. But I have a surer word than my own senses. I can’t even trust my own senses in a real experience of seeing the glory of Christ. But he says, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” and you do well to pay attention to it “as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

In other words, until Christ returns, you better stick with the Word since it states in 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, “that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Bible isn’t somebody’s experience; it isn’t somebody’s emotion, and it isn’t somebody’s feelings. It is the settled facts given by God that will never change. If you want human experience, you can have it. But Peter says that he will take the more sure word, the Word of God, not of human origin, not of human interpretation, but the Word of God. We possess the Bible today because men were moved by the Holy Spirit and were speaking for God as they recorded down the sacred Scriptures.

In John 14:8 we read:

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

In other words, Philip was saying, “Do a miracle! Show us God!” Jesus said to him in John 14:9: “Have I been so long time with you,

and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? In other words, I have told you all you need to know. You don't need a sign and a wonder. You don't need some mystical and ecstatic vision of God. I've told you all you need to know! I've demonstrated it in my life and my teaching. You don't need the miraculous but the truth of what I already taught you. Truth is to be the center point of our lives – not dreams, visions, and other esoteric experiences.

Caught Up to Paradise

Of course, one of the key experiences that people latch onto and play with is Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

The text unfolds to us that Paul was caught up to Heaven or Paradise. They say, "There, Paul had an out-of-body experience and so can we." Those who try and use a verse, such as this, to support their theory that people can have "near death" experiences, are trying to grind out a meaning that was never intended to be conveyed by the text. This is a false conclusion.

First, Paul never died. Many assume by this statement that Paul's spirit actually came out of his body and was transported to Heaven. However, there is no indication that Paul's spirit left his body in this account. The translators simply add the thought of what Paul's sensation might have been like. The text says that what he saw was a revelation of the Lord through visionary means ("visions and revelations of the Lord" - 12:1). This was similar to John's experience that he encountered which gave him insight to write and record the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:10).

Second, we must remember that Paul was a genuine apostle who was given this experience (2 Cor. 12:1-4) to verify his apostleship to

others and confirm the truth of God's infallible Word (Hebrews 2:3-4). Therefore, this is not an experience that can be shared by others. A person must be an apostle to pass through this type of visionary experience.

Third, Paul was not to reveal what he heard and saw through this heavenly vision, unlike those who supposedly go to the other side and tell of their entire experience. Other than the apostle John, God has never given permission to anybody to talk about the other side. Unlike modern charlatans, who claim trips to take trips to Heaven, Paul gave no sensational, detailed description of what he saw or experienced in Heaven.

Fourth, we must also conclude that God is not speaking to us in these last days through the use of visions, trances, or "out of body" experiences (1 Cor. 13:10). The Bible is complete and does not need to be supplemented by any further revelations or experiences. Paul's experience was a unique experience given to unique people, which could only occur in a unique time and for a unique reason. It's not an experience that can be duplicated by others.

It's interesting that Paul's vision was not intended to be a beneficial teaching tool in the New Testament Church or else he would have surely spoke of this vision in detail. What is beneficial or profitable is Scripture, which "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

For this reason, Paul commended the Ephesian elders, not to visions and extrabiblical revelations, but "to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Paul never built his life or revolved his ministry around apostolic visions or experiences, even his visionary experience of Heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-4). He revolved his life and ministry on what he knew was the revealed truth of God, and he called into question any experience that violated Scripture.

Acts 28:23

“And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.”

At the end of his ministry in the 28th chapter of Acts, we find Paul at his lodging, and people were there in large numbers. And what was Paul doing? He was explaining to the people about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, by using both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. He did this from morning until evening. Paul was in the Scripture trying to prove the truth from the pages of the Word of God – not experience. We should follow his example. What is profitable for our Christian faith, life, and growth is Scripture. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Astral Projection



Those who promote the occult practice of astral projection attribute the experiences of Paul (2 Cor. 12:1-4) and John (Rev. 1:10) to soul travel, which means people can actually project themselves into another spiritual dimension and move about at will. Some suggest that out-of-body experiences are actually instances of people experiencing astral projection.

I read where one man was actually charging 175 dollars to show others how they can create their own “out of the body” experience. This practice involves the soul, or the spirit of a person leaving their physical body, and being able to travel invisibly in the realm of the spirit world.

Robert Monroe, a researcher in this field, even stated that he had projected himself into another bedroom and had physical relations with another woman, while lying in bed with his own wife! We are living in a demented and morally twisted world today that is being flooded with mystical experiences. Again, Paul's experience had nothing to do with an out-of-body experience since he never died.

Seeing Jesus

Another experience that people relate to a "near death" experience is Stephen's experience in Acts 7:54-55. However, Stephen's spirit did not leave his body until after he was stoned (vv. 57-58). Therefore, this is not a "near death" or "out-of-body" experience. Apparently Stephen had a vision of Jesus standing on the right hand of God the Father, who was waiting to receive Him, at his time of death. Stephen actually saw Heaven before he was stoned and before his spirit departed from his body. As a result, Stephen could not have had an out of-body experience.

Apparently, like other close associates to the apostle, Stephen had an in-body visionary experience. Stephen was still alive on earth when he saw this vision of Jesus and Heaven. Following the Biblical pattern, Stephen's spirit did not leave his body until his actual death (Mark 15:37). Furthermore, his spirit went immediately into God's presence. That is why Stephen cried, "Lord, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). After his death, his spirit immediately departed to be with Christ. There was no in-between state where his spirit floated around or wandered about.

What really happened? It's obvious that Stephen was given a visionary glimpse of seeing Jesus in Heaven before he was about to die. The Bible says that Stephen "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Later, when he was about to die, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:60).

Some suggest that Stephen saw Christ in the twilight zone between life and death. However, this experience was unique in that it happened *before* Stephen died, not at the exact time of his death, or in a state of transition between death and the afterlife. Stephen was

not stoned until after he saw Jesus. Therefore, this is a vision Stephen was given, while he was still in his body; it was not an out-of-body experience.

Stephen's vision of Heaven and Jesus became a positive encouragement that Christ was waiting to receive him when he would die! God gave Stephen an awareness that He was about to enter the Lord's presence and Christ revealed Himself to Him in a special visionary way just prior to His death. However, the real purpose for this vision is that it served to verify the truth about life after death in Heaven for His Church-age saints. It was a vision designed to demonstrate to Jews that God was blessing all Christians who were in the Church. Visions always served to communicate truth primarily to Jewish people, who needed signs and miracles to create faith in their hearts (1 Cor. 1:22), prior to the finalization of the canon of Scripture. Such was the case in this text (vv. 51-53).

Although Stephen's experience was the result of a vision and occurred before he died, this is not to say that there can never be a short transition of time between life and death, where the human spirit, which is still residing in the body, can get a glimpse of what he or she is about to enter. There is obviously a transit state between one's death and departure into the next life. The human spirit (2 Kings 6:17) may get a glimpse of the place that it's about to enter when it's ready to pass to the other side.

There are ample reports of people experiencing some effects of the place they are about to enter, while their spirit is hovering between this life and the next. No, these are not out-of-body experiences, but occurrences that can take place as the veil of the curtain is taken away and one's spirit is about to enter the next life.

In the book, "Dying Testimonies of Saved and Unsaved" (1898), there are many well attested death-bed scenes of infidels and atheists have been recorded from authentic sources. The record relates that in those days many unbelievers died in awful agony. They did not have the drugs we do today. Therefore, dying during these days did not ease people into eternity like many are today in our hospitals. People in earlier times mostly died at home in their own bed while fully conscious.

In some cases, the blood curdling terrifying screams of the lost, while in the throes of death, could be heard blocks away! Infidels have died screaming that they could see devils in the room waiting to drag their lost souls to hell. So dreadful were some of these death-bed scenes that relatives fled out of the house and would not return unto the screaming man expired! Nurses who have attended some noted dying infidels have stated that they wish never again to go through such a terrifying ordeal.

Dr. Rawlings, who was not a believer, was once testing a patient on a treadmill, when he went into cardiac arrest. Rawlings and his nurse immediately sought to revive him by massaging his heart and doing CPR. The patient passed in and out of consciousness. But every time he revived, he screamed, "I am, in hell!" He pleaded with Rawlings not to let him slip back into unconsciousness.

The patient lapsed into unconsciousness again. When he revived, he said, "Don't you understand? I am in hell." Each time you quit CPR I go back to hell! Don't let me go back to hell."

Of course, this man was not moving back and forth from hell; however, it is possible that he was in the transit state or time of transition between life and death. It's during this short time, while their spirit still resides in their human body, that the curtain may be drawn back, so that the human spirit can get a foretaste of what that person will enjoy or either fear for all eternity.

On a brighter note, I'm reminded of what D. L. Moody said as he hovered between life and death. "Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go."

On the Mountain

Another experience that people equate with a "near death" experience is the Mount of Transfiguration experience recorded in Matthew 17:1-3. Here is the reasoning of the objector. Since Moses and Elijah reappeared after they had died, this means that we too should be able to reappear after we die. This is almost too silly to comment on. First, this is not a record of the spirit of these men

roaming about after their death. They had been dead for hundreds of years. Rather, this experience related to the bodily resurrection of Moses who had already died hundreds of years ago. However, in the case of Elijah, he never died. Therefore, his spirit never departed from his body! These conclusions verify that these are not near-death or out-of-body experiences. This is a resurrection for Moses and a reappearance of Elijah in his original body. There are no spirits roaming or floating around on this mountain!

To build an experience-oriented theology upon this event is doing a serious injustice to the Word of God. Like the miraculous return of Samuel from the dead (1 Samuel 28:11-12), God was bringing these three men back from their abode in paradise to fulfill a special divine purpose. The purpose of Samuel was to bring a message to Saul during the days of ongoing Old Testament revelation. The purpose of Moses and Elijah was to represent the future resurrected and translated company of believers, who will return with Christ to establish His earthly Kingdom (Matt. 16:28).

Moses represents the Old Testament saints who will be raised for the Millennial Kingdom (Dan. 12:1-2), Elijah represents saved individuals who will not experience death, but will be caught up to heaven alive (1 Thess. 4:17). The disciples (Peter, James and John) represent individuals who will be present in their physical bodies when the King returns. In any event, these two men returning from the afterlife do not provide any support or proof for out-of-body experiences. In fact, these men were actually in their body! They were not out-of-body experiences.

In-the-Body Experiences

Although these “out-of-body” experiences are considered to be amazing, they are contradictory to the Bible’s teachings concerning death. The interpretation of such experiences is based on the premise that the individuals actually died. However, it’s been previously proven that the Bible never teaches a person can die and return to his body after death has occurred (Eccl. 12:7; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8). Therefore, whatever is happening to these people, who claim to have these near death experiences, is not true Biblical death. It’s some other experience unrelated to death. It’s an experience that

has occurred while the human spirit was still residing in the human body.

It becomes obvious that people who were revived, after having these near death experiences, have not actually died in the Biblical sense; rather, they have been in an unconscious state or condition. Jesus, who has the keys to the realm of death (Rev. 1:18), can keep the spirit within the human body, even when a body might be clinically dead and show no vital signs. Therefore, the phenomenon that people are experiencing is not an out-of-body experience but an “in body” experience.

I don't doubt that many of these people are experiencing something, but whatever they are experiencing is taking place while they are still alive. The point is this; any experience, which these people have had, occurred while they were still alive from a Biblical standpoint, while their spirit still resided in their bodies. Any person who claims to have had some kind of “out-of-body” experience following death is not telling the truth. They actually had an “in-the-body experience” while they were still alive! These alleged “near death” experiences are the experiences of dying people; they are not the experiences of dead people!

At this point, we must remember that not all parts of the body die at the same time. This means that while some clinical signs of a functioning body may be absent, the body does not totally cease functioning in all of its capacity. In other words, people are not always dead, when they are pronounced dead, or when at least certain parts of the body cease to function.

In addition, it's the human spirit that functions behind the human brain (1 Cor. 2:11); therefore, the human spirit can take over even when the brain is no longer clinically functioning. As a result, people can experience certain phenomena while their spirit is still in their body and even when their brain is not functioning.

This leaves us with the question of why certain people encounter these experiences, while they are still alive and their spirit remains in their body. What is the cause of these near-death experiences?

The Explanations

There are six possible explanations for these alleged out-of-body experiences that thousands and thousands of people are claiming to have.

#1

These near death encounters may be due to the mind (psychological) factor of people, who are undergoing intense trauma. The mind can obviously create various illusionary effects due to traumatic occurrence. I think this is one of the key factors for many of these “out of the body” experiences. The mind can create many illusionary effects caused by intense trauma and bring about certain imaginary occurrences, which are actually based upon one’s belief system. In other words, a person’s belief system will result in an out-of-body experience that best suits his religious background. This is why the near-death experiences of many people are somehow related to a person’s religious heritage – a Catholic sees Mary, a Mormon sees Joseph Smith, and another person sees Jesus.

All of these out-of-body experiences, or near-death experiences, should be treated in the same way as a dream, which is an unexplained psychological phenomenon that may make a good story, but does not give us truth.

#2

These out-of-body encounters may also be due to the nervous system (neurological). The nervous system may very well create various effects that bring about certain life-like experiences, which are really imaginary. According to recent work by neuroscientists, these experiences can be induced by delivering mild electric current to specific spots in the brain.

In one woman, for example, a zap to a brain region called the angular gyrus resulted in a sensation that she was hanging from the ceiling, looking down at her body. In another woman, electrical current delivered to the angular gyrus produced an uncanny feeling that someone was behind her, intent on interfering with her actions.

It has been discovered by science that it is electrical signals and impulses that activate the brain and central nervous system. In order to properly operate, the brain depends on a constant supply of blood and oxygen. When there is interference in blood circulation and respiratory functions, even for only a few minutes, the brain starts to malfunction, and will eventually shut down. Some researchers theorize that the bizarre perceptions and sensations commonly associated with the experience of “coming back to life” can be attributed to the brain and nervous system’s electrical malfunctions caused by the traumatic impact of nearly dying.

#3

These near death encounters may also be related to human behavior (physiological). Man is continually finding out how humans react to trauma and how the body functions in relationship to trauma, creating imaginary, and yet life-like occurrences, in the human brain. Many people have reported seeing their entire lives flash before them, as they were about to die, or when they allegedly have died. I remember hearing a man share how his helicopter was twirling out of control, the earth was getting closer as it plunged downward, and during this process his mind began to wander back to his childhood days, since he thought he was about to die.

#4

These near-death encounters may also be drug-induced (pharmacological). Certain drugs produce hallucinatory effects causing the mind to dream and experience what seem to be real-life experiences. In fact, those who have been placed in comas for medical reasons, through the use of pharmaceutical drugs, have reported having all kinds of hallucinatory experiences. Drugs, which have a mind-altering effect, have long been associated with the occult (Gal. 5:20). When it comes to mind-altering drugs, Satan can make a bad situation worse.

One fine Christian man shared with me that while he was in a medically-induced coma, he experienced dreadful and hideous creatures, who were trying to frighten him. The effects of drugs can

cause our brains to not function properly. In fact, it's possible that certain drugs, which keep us on the brink of death, can actually take us into another world that is open to spirit beings and experiences that are not normally sensed, when the human brain is functioning properly.

Generally speaking, drugs can produce many strange effects in the human mind. After presenting these truths to my people, a man shared with me that when he was a boy, he had his tonsils removed. He was given drugs to put him to sleep and he could remember dreaming about his body spinning through tunnels and experiencing strange phenomenon.

#5

The near-death encounters may also be demonically induced (Satanology). The Biblical realization that Satan and his demonic followers are full of deception, would lead us to believe that the devil is deceiving people in these last days, through dream-like occurrences. It should not surprise us that Satan and his followers are actively engaged in these so-called out-of-body experiences.

One of the most common characteristics of the so-called near-death experience is encountering a being of light. This being is said to emanate love and warmth. It has been claimed by numerous individuals, who have had alleged near-death experiences, that the being of light they encountered was none other than Jesus Christ. As appealing as the idea may initially sound, this identification seems to be flawed in view of the fact that the being of light typically says and does things contrary to the Christ of the Bible.

We must remember that Satan has the ability to appear as an "angel of light" (messenger of light) and as a "servant of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). His goal, of course, is to lead people astray in this life through his deceptive followers. Satan and the world of demons can communicate to our spirit while it still resides in the body (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, while a person is close to death, it is very probable that Satan can come to deceive them. The devil and his followers are very happy and ready to mimic a being of light, if the end result will lead people away from the true Christ of Scripture.

2 Corinthians 11:14 says:

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

The Bible teaches that Satan himself can transform (“masquerade”) himself into a messenger of light. This sounds frightening when one realizes that infidels and atheists also see similar beings of light during their near-death experiences. They could feel the presence of this “being” and knew that this “being” loved them and would never harm them. It was indescribable and incredible they say. I must conclude that it is not incredible, but actually terrifying, when you know about the deceptive tactics of the devil.

1Timothy 4:1 clearly states: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

T.A. McMahon makes this important observation:

“What we do know about that and other types of drug-induced conditions of mind (even dream states, meditation, and an overworked imagination) is that multitudes of people have reported experiences that seem to validate everything from clinical or near-death events to past-lives journeys to abductions on UFOs. They also reveal information for which they had no basis of knowledge prior to their experiences. It may be that an altered state of consciousness creates a condition in which the mind is like a blank screen, open to outside input. Spirit entities, whose goal it is to undermine the Word of God and deceive the world, might have that ability to program the blank screen and could therefore take advantage of anyone in such a highly susceptible condition” (see Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*, pp. 187-90).

The spirit world is something we know little about since we are not actually on the “other side” and operating in the realm of this spiritual dimension. Therefore, we don’t know how these programmable messages containing previously unknown information are transmitted to people through spirit beings but they do occur and one cannot rule out the underworld as the source of this type of knowledge along with the creation of dreams and visions regarding Heaven and the

afterlife, many of which go against Biblical revelation. Satan knows how to deceive the human mind, which exists in the spiritual realm, and he certainly knows how to disseminate misinformation about death and the afterlife in order to deceive people about the true nature of death for unsaved people (Heb. 9:27).

#6

The near-death” encounters occurring today may also be a combination of any of the previously mentioned conclusions. Anything from psychological, neurological, physiological, pharmacological, to Satanology may be a probable cause of these experiences. However, even if Satan is not directly linked to all of these out-of-body experiences, he certainly is indirectly related to them, as he seeks to give people a false view of eternity and the afterlife.

Satan can actually use a variety of means (psychological, neurological, physiological, pharmacological) to manipulate the minds of people. Through all these reports and the present day publicity of these alleged after-death experiences, Satan is trying to focus the attention of people upon an easy afterlife, one without judgment. Of course, God has a different story for unbelievers, who reject salvation through Jesus Christ (Ps. 9:17; John 3:36; Rev. 14:9-10).

When listening to many of these near-death reports, one can conclude that Satan is trying to counterfeit the truth of God’s Word. He is trying to deceive people about death and the afterlife. For the most part, the devil paints the afterlife as a rosy and peaceful experience that all people of all faiths encounter. Satan is obviously accommodating all religions in these out-of-body experiences. We live in a day of “feel good” religion instead of the “old time” religion.

People with or without religious backgrounds (atheists) have supposedly seen lost loved ones and experienced the warmth of love and forgiveness, no matter how evil and unbelieving they were in this life. Likewise, Indians saw their religious figures on the other side of death. A Hindu would see their Hindu deity and a Christian patient would see Jesus, many times in a brilliance of light. In addition, a review of one’s earthly life without the fear of judgment or Hell was also a universal experience of many near-death patients.

This is exactly what Satan wants people to believe concerning the next life. He wants them to believe that the other side of death is a place of warmth, love, forgiveness, and a place where there resides a “being of light,” which expresses itself as the god of the people’s choice. Once again, in most near death experiences people meet a being of light that sees all religions equally valid and a friendly being who welcomes everyone into Heaven regardless of whether or not they place faith in Christ. They discover there is no hell and sin is not a problem. Something is definitely wrong with this picture.

The discerning believer can very easily recognize satanic intervention in these experiences to some degree. This may also be the reason why various people come out of these experiences knowing certain things about dead relatives and other earthly experiences in this life, which they never previously heard about or knew about, prior to their alleged out-of-body experience. Satan, through the world of the occult, has long been responsible for giving out secret information to impress people and lead them astray into a world of mystical experience (Deuteronomy 18:10-11).

Raymond Frame, a former missionary to China, has said: “Evil spirits can easily find opportunity to operate in the believer’s emotional life — especially when the believer is persuaded to suspend all intellectual activity and to yield his will over to an invisible intelligence (whom the Christian, of course, is persuaded to regard as being the Holy Spirit Himself).”

We are told in II Corinthians 11:4 that even believing Christians can experience the deception of “another spirit,” other than the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that Satan uses the minds of people to lead them astray into wrong philosophies and experiences, which contradict the Word of God (1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Corinthians 11:3). This may certainly be an underlying cause and plausible explanation of many of these “near death” experiences that people are having today.

The Veil Remains in Place

In conclusion, we must agree with the testimony of Scripture (Isa. 8:20), which declares an immediate departure of the human spirit into the place of Heaven (2 Cor. 5:8) or hell (Heb. 9:27), after death has

occurred. The Bible also declares that the human spirit, once it leaves the body, can never return to the body until the time of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:22). The uniform testimony of the Bible gives no evidence for out-of-body experiences. Therefore, we must believe the Scriptures (Rom. 4:3), instead of the testimonies of people, who claim to have out-of-body experiences and who even make the bold claims that they have gone to Heaven and returned. Our faith must be anchored on the absolute standard of God's Word (Heb. 11:1) instead of the fleeting and ever-changing experiences of people.



The veil or curtain between earth and Heaven remains in place. A person cannot cross over this veil until they die in the Biblical sense. What God wants us to know about Heaven is revealed in the Bible, through the record of Scripture; as for the rest, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29).