

## **Soul Sleep**

**By Pastor Art Watkins**

There are many people who are deceived by the false doctrine of *soul sleep*. They say that when a Christian dies his soul does not leave his body and does not go to heaven. It stays somewhere on earth until the second coming of Christ and then is raised from the dead. Many people who teach soul sleep also teach that when lost people die their soul is dead like a dog. It does not go to hell because they don't believe in hell. These people teach the souls of dead Christians sleeps like a log and the souls of lost people are dead like a dog.

But what saith the scriptures? The scriptures say the doctrine of soul sleep is another false doctrine that we should not be deceived by.

In Philippians 1:21-24 Paul said: ***For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.***

In these verses Paul was in a straight between two options; death and life. The best option as far as he was concerned was death for he said to *depart and to be with Christ is far better*. It would have been far better when you consider that at the time he wrote this epistle he was suffering in a prison in Rome.

Concerning death he said; *to depart and to be with Christ*. This tells us that when a person dies a departure takes place. Their soul and spirit leaves their body and this world. This means the dead in Christ are not in this world any longer. It also means they are not in their body any longer and they are not even in the grave we bury them in. They have departed. To a Christian, death is a departure from the flesh and the world.

In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul writing about his coming death said: ***For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.***

Paul's departure was not a trip to another town or nation. He died in Rome and his body was buried in Rome. His departure was his death. His body died, but he departed from his body and from this world. What departed? His soul and spirit. In Genesis 35:18 it says that when Rachel died; ***It came to pass, as her soul was in departing, for she died.***

Every death is a departure. At death our soul will leave our body and this world. They may not go to the same place, but your soul will depart from this world and from your body when you die.

Your physical body is a temporary house. When you die you will move out of it. As a matter of fact you will not attend your own funeral. Your body will be there, but your soul and spirit will be departed and gone.

In Luke 16:20-26 Jesus told us a true story of two men who died and were buried at the same time, but went two different places. He said one man died: ***and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments.*** The other man died and the Lord said: ***he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*** Their bodies were dead and buried, but their soul and spirit departed this world. One man went to hell the moment he died and the other to Paradise.

In Philippians 1:23 Paul said that when he died he would not only depart this world, but he told us where he was going after he departed. When you take a trip you depart from one location and arrive at another. Death is a departure from this world into another. Paul tells us where that place is. He said: ***having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*** When Paul died he expected to go where Christ was. He expected to be with Christ after his departure from this world. Therefore, where Christ is, the dead in Christ go, for the dead in Christ depart to be with Christ when they die.

According to Colossians and Ephesians Christ is in heavenly places. In Colossians 3:1 Paul wrote: ***If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.***

In Ephesians 1:20 he also wrote that God raised Christ from the dead: ***and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.***

If the dead in Christ have departed to be with Christ, then the dead in Christ are in heavenly places with Christ. Therefore, the dead in Christ are not in the grave yard. They are not in their bodies. They are not even in this world. Their soul and spirit are in heavenly places with Christ. Paul expected to go to heavenly places when he died, because that is where Christ is.

Heavenly places is a big place so what place in heaven are the dead in Christ? The answer is: the Heavenly City New Jerusalem because that is the present location of Christ. In Hebrews 12:18-23 Paul wrote:

***But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,***

***To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.***

In these verses Paul describes the Heavenly City New Jerusalem. He opens the door and gives us a view of who occupies that heavenly city. Every city has a population and these verses describe the occupants of New Jerusalem. If you could look inside the city you would see:

***\*An innumerable company of angels***

So many angels they cannot be numbered.

***\*God the Judge of all***

This is God the Father seated on his throne surrounded by angels. See Revelation 4:2-3, Daniel 7:13

***\*The church of the first born which are written in heaven***

God has given the church the name of Christ for he is the first born or first fruits of the dead: See Colossians 1:18, Acts 26:23, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. Their names are written in New Jerusalem for they are citizens of that city. See Ephesians 2:19.

***\*The spirits of just men made perfect***

They are the dead in Christ. They are called *the spirits of just men made perfect* because they are justified and their souls and spirits are now in heaven. They are the family of God in heaven. (See Ephesians 3:14-15)

***\*Jesus the mediator of the new covenant***

This shows us where in heavenly places Christ is located. He is now in the Heavenly City New Jerusalem and the spirits of just men made perfect are with him. So, where do the dead in Christ go when they depart from this world? These verses show us plainly that they go where Christ is, the Heavenly City New Jerusalem. They now occupy that city with God the Father, God the Son and all the holy angels.

What about the souls of the lost? In Luke 16 the lost man who died went to hell and in hell he began to suffer. Luke 16:23-24 says: ***And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have***

***mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.***

This man was not dead like a dog. He suffered in hell after his death. (Anyone who says this is a parable should not be taken seriously.)

In Revelation 20 John said: ***And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.***

These verses give us a preview of the coming judgment of the dead. After these dead people are judged they are cast into the lake of fire. This shows us beyond a shadow of doubt that when lost people die they do not cease to exist. They will be judged after they die and cast into the lake of fire after they die. Death is not the end of a person's existence. You will spend eternity somewhere. These people will spend eternity burning in the lake of fire. What about you?

Soul sleep is just another doctrine of the devil designed to take the fear of death and hell out of the minds of lost people. This false doctrine also steals the comfort from the minds of saved people who have loved ones who have died in the Lord. It is of great comfort to me to know that my son, mother and father are now in the Heavenly City New Jerusalem with Christ, the angels, the Father, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

Don't be deceived by the false doctrine of soul sleep and shame on you professed Christians who teach this lie!