

DEATH

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Death...we don't like to think about it. We don't talk about it unless we have to. It feels like it's a dark secret, a mystery and something we can't ever understand. Most people have experienced death in some way at some point. Have you lost someone (yes, *animals count*) to death? Although death is a sad experience, it really shouldn't be scary. The Bible tells us so much about death and what happens when we die, that we really shouldn't be afraid. In fact, the Bible doesn't talk about some grim reaper that travels around at night with a scythe ready to take people's lives. Nope, over 50 times, the Bible refers to death as SLEEP! Are you afraid to sleep? Hopefully not, but as the Bible talks about death as sleep, the fear of death should leave you. Not only that, but the picture of life after death is unbelievable! But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. There are some questions that we have to ask.

"What happens when you die?"

That's an awesome question! And to answer that question, you have to go back to the beginning story of humans on Earth. It's found in Genesis 2. Jesus has already spoken the world into existence. There are trees and plants, rivers and mountains, but there is one thing that is missing...people! So, God decides to make humans that look just like Him. And here's how He did it!

Genesis 2:7 says, "The Lord God formed the man from the _____ of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the _____ of life, and the man became a living _____."

It's kind of a math formula, really. It's a simple addition problem where **something** plus **something** equals **something** else. It looks like this:

DUST + BREATH = LIVING BEING

There are two ingredients that make a living being, Dust and the Breath of God. If either one are missing, then the living being doesn't exist anymore. Isn't that how addition works? Now, we already know what happens to our bodies when we die. If you went to a cemetery and dug up a grave, what would you find? Would you find a body that had skin? Nope. Depending on how long that body had been there, you might only find a pile of dirt and dust in the casket. When we die, our bodies decay back into dust! And if we go back to the addition problem, that means that when people die, and their bodies decay, they stop existing!

Here's how Ecclesiasties puts it...

Ecclesiasties 12:7: "...the _____ returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit (breath) returns to _____ who gave it."

WHAT? So the Bible says that our bodies turn back into dust, a.k.a. dirt, and the breath that God gave Adam (and every human when we become alive) goes back to Him. So what happens to us? Are we still able to think and have ideas after death?

Ecclesiasties 9:5 says: "The living know that they will die, but the dead know _____."

Psalms 115:17 says: "The dead do not _____ God..."

When people die, they cease to exist! They don't go to Heaven. They don't go to Hell. They don't go to some weird in-between place like purgatory. They just don't exist! They don't have a mind to think. They don't have a heart to praise God. They just are gone! But what about Heaven? Don't we get to live with Jesus forever? When do we get there? That's a great question, and here's what the Bible says.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 says: "According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still _____, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep (died). For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the _____ in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

So when Jesus comes back to take us to Heaven, He blows a trumpet and shouts to those that loved Him but died, and they are resurrected (more on this later)! They rise from their graves and begin to fly up to meet Jesus as He is coming to earth. Then, the rest of the people that love Jesus and are still alive begin to fly up to Him as well. And, as everyone is joined together, we begin the journey to heaven, together. Doesn't that sound like an incredible event? I can't wait to see it!

"How do the dead get their bodies back?"

This is a GREAT question! And the Bible gives us the answer again.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 says: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall be _____ - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised _____, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on _____. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

BASIC POINT

God cares enough about us that He has a plan to be with us even **AFTER** death!

Don't get confused here with all the big words. Basically, right now, our bodies are corruptible and mortal. That means that we can get sick. We can get cancer. We can get the flu. It means that right now, our bodies are dying! Have you ever thought about that? Our dying bodies are the result of sin. But, in Heaven, there can be no sin, so our bodies must be perfect as well. This verse basically says that when Jesus comes, our bodies (whether we have died and are resurrected, or whether we are still alive when He comes) will be changed from a sinful body that can get sick, into a body that is perfect! No more disease! No more warts! No more colds! No more fevers! No more broken bones. We will be made perfect...incorruptible and immortal!

“Well what about the ‘absent from the body’ verse?”

It’s easy to take Bible verses out of context and get confused on the big idea that describes who God is. This verse is found in 2 Corinthians 5:6,8. Paul is comparing two different bodies...the earthly body (sick, mortal, dying) and the heavenly body (heathly, immortal, incorruptible). When he says, “absent from the body, present with the Lord,” he is not telling us that when we die, our body stays here on earth but our soul goes up to Heaven where we live with Jesus. He’s just looking forward to the day when Jesus comes back to take us home, and we no longer have the earthly, sickly body, but we are present with God and have our new immortal body! Make sense?

“If all this is true, then why do so many people believe that when you die, you go to Heaven??”

The Devil does a really good job at tricking humans to believe something so that we will have a confused picture of who God is. This idea that people go to Heaven when they die is one of those lies. It doesn’t really make sense that “Grandma is up in heaven right now looking down on me...” Does she watch you sin? Does she watch you make bad choices? Does she watch you when you hurt? Heaven is a place where there will be no more pain or crying. If she died and went to Heaven, how can she hurt for me if there is no more pain? Satan’s lies are always trying to distract you from the true picture of who God is, and this lie is designed so that you won’t trust Him. If the Devil can make us believe that when we die, we go right to Heaven, then it means that we don’t have to trust that Jesus’ death is enough to get us there! It means that we don’t really need Jesus anymore, and He’s kind of...worthless! Isn’t that a crazy lie? Isn’t he sneaky and tricky and making us believe his lies?

Here’s the reality, God has a beautiful plan for us when it comes to death and the after life. His plan is based on faith in Him and trust in Jesus that His death gave victory over human death. All we have to do is accept His death for us, and if we die before His 2nd coming, then we can rest assured that when He comes, He will take us home to live with Him forever. And I can only imagine how wonderful it will be! Everything will be brand new! Jesus even tells this to us in Revelation. He says:

Revelation 21:5: “I am making everything _____.”

I still remember the morning that it happened... My mom came into my room and said, “Grandma died.” I didn’t know what to say. I just put on my clothes, got in my car, and drove the few miles over to my grandma’s house. I walked inside, down the hallway and into her bedroom. There was my grandpa softly crying, and there was my grandma. Her body was laying on the bed, and as I sat down next to her body, I picked up her hand. It was cold. Oh, how it hurt to lose her! Death stings! It hurts! I remember thinking of the verse where Jesus puts an end to death. He died, but He rose again! Death couldn’t keep Him in the grave, and He says:

I Corinthians 15:55: “Where, O death, is your _____?
Where, O death, is your _____?”

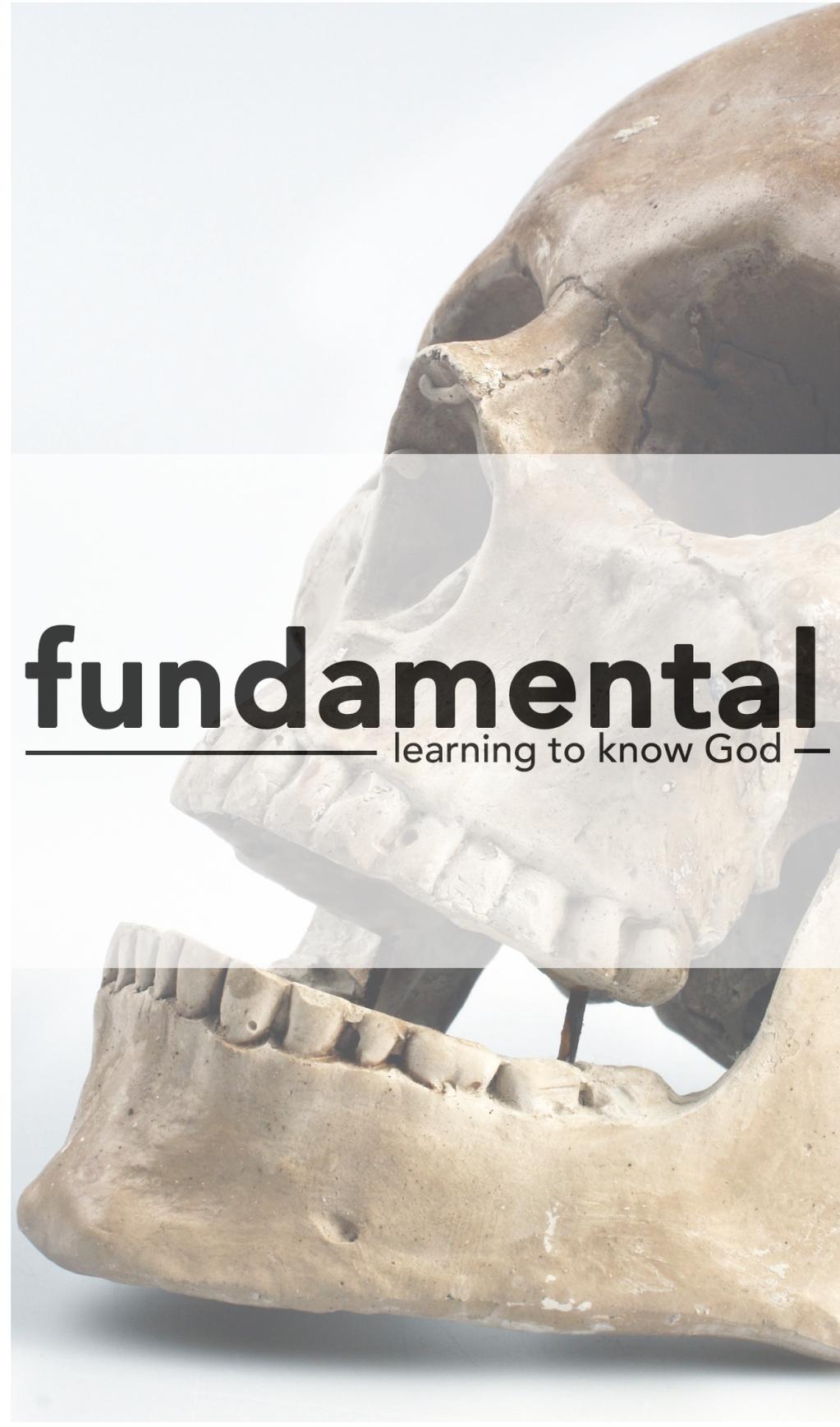
Death isn’t powerful enough to own Jesus, and because of His victory, it’s not strong enough to own us when we die either! Jesus’ love for you and me is more powerful than even death. Death cannot keep His love away from us. Because He lives, we can too.

Thank you, Jesus, for loving us enough to die for us, so that even if we die here on earth, You will give us new bodies and a new life with you in Heaven!

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. What questions are you having about what happens to people when they die?
2. Why do you think people believe that when you die, you go to Heaven?
3. What does understanding this lesson tell you about God?

LESSON 6: STATE OF THE DEAD



fundamental
learning to know God