



# **Can Living Talk with Dead?**

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**Berean Series  
Bible Studies**

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## Can Living Talk with Dead?

**T**his is a very important subject, and the correct answer from God's Word is the real basis of all truth, upon which we may place our hope and trust for all things, both in this life and also for the life to come.

It may be asked, What could be the motive in the desire for anyone to communicate with a departed relative or friend? At once we realize that it is the heart desire not to be separated from those we love. We long and yearn for a continuation of those tender ties which rightly bind loved ones together on earth. Thus we see clearly that this fellowship with dear relatives and friends was never intended to be broken. In other words, we were never intended to die, and mankind would never have died had there been obedience to the loving Creator. "**The wages of sin is death**", is the Scriptural declaration right throughout God's Word.

Paul says in Rom. 6:23 — "For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord." If God had not provided a means of salvation as a gift of life, there would never have been a resurrection of life to follow in any shape or form after the death sentence was justly pronounced on our first parents.

But it is the longing and yearning within the human breast for lasting association with loved ones, which, while right and proper in itself, can lead to the greatest deception when the truths of God's Word are either ignored or misunderstood. While it may seem strange, it is nevertheless true that God permits misunderstanding of His Word, or ignorance of its truths, in all who are not sincere enough to really wish to know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Possibly we have all met people who in their bereavement are so strongly influenced by the desire to continue in contact with a departed loved one, so absorbed with the desire to receive messages as to the welfare of the one dead, that they completely isolate themselves from God and His Word. In other words they want their own will done. They wish their own desires to be fulfilled irrespective of what God's plan is in regard to humanity, and what God has decreed is best for His human family.

Satan, of course, is active to take advantage of all who are so minded, and Paul tells us in 2 Thess. 2:10,11 that "God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie" — while in this state of mind — "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." They are deceived by their

own desires when not studying God's Word to find out just what it teaches on the subject.

Let us examine the Apostle Paul's wonderful presentation of the subject of death and the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15, from verse 12. This is most enlightening, and helps us to see the true position in regard to death and the life hereafter. It reads as follows — "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order:

Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his presence" — 1 Cor. 15:12-23. What, we ask, are the two outstanding facts Paul presents in these verses? They are that both death and the resurrection are real, absolutely true. So true is death, says Paul, that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then all hope of a future life is lost. Does Paul contradict other statements in the Bible? Does he contradict or disagree with Christ? No, he surely does not! Who then, would be proud and foolish enough to set themselves up as an authority and contradict Christ, the Apostle Paul and all the true servants of God? There are thousands of preachers today who are, unintentionally doing just this by preaching the immortality of the soul; in other words, that there is no real death. At a recent funeral service the minister declared, in speaking of the departed one, that death was like going through a door into another life. Then, at the graveside, he declared that in committing the body to the grave, he did so in the hope of a resurrection of the dead, unknowingly contradicting the previous statement.

But does someone say there are passages in the Bible which seem to indicate that those passed on in death are still living? Yes, we admit that some parts of God's Word, on the

surface, seem to so teach. But no one is entitled to form conclusions on any subject on a mere surface reading of the Scriptures. That is where inconsistencies, misunderstandings and contradictions come in, when there is no Bible study to determine just what God's Word says on any particular subject.

Let us examine some passages of God's Word on which wrong conclusions are based by taking only a surface reading. Matthew 17:1-8 is one such passage. This was the occasion when the Lord took three disciples up into the Mount. It reads as follows —  
“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and

were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." On the surface it appears that Moses and Elias were with the Lord and the disciples. But when we read verse 9 and examine it, we see what the Lord is teaching us and the disciples at that time. "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." What is a vision? It is a picture, a tableau, illustrating something important. From the visions John had on the Isle of Patmos, we find they typified or depicted various phases of the Kingdom and events covering the whole Gospel Age. The nations are pictured by various beasts, and so on. Here in Matt. 17 we have a similar picture, illustrating a wonderful truth.

Paul had wonderful visions and revelations given to him. 2 Cor.12:1 helps us to see what the Lord meant in taking His disciples up in the mountain and giving them this picture. "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." Then he goes on to describe the scenes. He was even carried away, in vision, to the third heavens, and saw things not possible to utter, meaning, that those pictures must

have been for his own information, to encourage him in the ministry, and were not to be revealed at that particular time.

Thus we learn that Moses and Elias were not actually present on the mount, but rather were in picture form, representing two phases of the Kingdom, as our Lord indicated in Matt. 16:28 — “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” And they saw a wonderful picture of Christ in His kingdom. Elias, who was caught up in a chariot of fire, represented the heavenly phase of the kingdom, and Moses represented the earthly phase of the kingdom. The three disciples saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, in this vision described in Matthew 17. In 2 Kings 2:11 we read — “And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” We might think that he went up alive if there were not other Scriptures to help us see that Elijah was taken in death, and made a picture of the Church.

From Heb. 11:5 we find that “Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” This is apt to be misunderstood until we realize that as Enoch pleased God, he was relieved of the experience of dying, of any distress, anguish and pain. He did not see or experience death

— God took him. How do we know that Enoch and Elijah were not taken up alive and are still living in heaven? Our Lord's words in John 3:13 state — "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man." It will be realized that Jesus was speaking prospectively of Himself at that time, for He was still on earth, when making that statement. Keeping in mind that no one had ascended to heaven impresses the truth that death means death, the cessation of life until the resurrection day. This truth protects us against the deceptive influences of the evil one which would deceive, if possible, those who give themselves over to desiring something which is quite unscriptural.

Old Testament Scriptures are of course in agreement with the words of Jesus. We have the case of David — "So David slept with his fathers", and the same is stated of Solomon — 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43. Job described the death condition in the words — "Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Job even prayed to go to the Bible hell — "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave (sheol) until thy wrath be passed." He wanted God to hide him away from the trouble of the world; not to go into more trouble at death, as the creeds teach. Job had

the inspiration to know there would be a resurrection call, and he would respond to that call because God would awaken him and bring him back in the resurrection day — Job 3:17; 14:13-15.

In Acts 2 a helpful contrast is revealed between our Lord Jesus and David. Of our Lord it states — “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” — verse 24. This is a reference to the prophecy in the psalms — “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” That is, the Bible hell, the condition of death — Psalm 16:10. Of David we read in Acts 2:29,34 — “He is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day; for David is not ascended into the heavens.” This of course confirms the Old Testament record that David “slept with his fathers,” and is still asleep in death, waiting for the resurrection day.

How important it is also to realize that even Christ’s resurrection from death was not immediate when He died on the cross. In 1 Cor. 15:3,4, we read — “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and he was buried, and rose again the third day.” In our Lord’s message to John on the Isle of Patmos, in Rev. 1:18, it states — “I am he that liveth,

and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Since He has paid the ransom price for humanity, He has the right to unlock the prisonhouse of death, in due time, and bring all mankind back to life, that they may learn to love and obey the laws of His kingdom, and gain lasting life on the restored earth.

Someone may say, What about the thief on the cross, as recorded in Luke 23:42,43. This thief had repented, and could see this wonderful Man with the inscription over His cross — "Jesus, King of the Jews." So this man said — "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And Jesus said unto him — "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." That is the way it reads in our Authorised Version of the Bible, but we know that punctuation is not inspired; it is supplied by the translators. Let us read it correctly — "Verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise." That thief is still in the death condition. He was not in paradise with the Lord that day, for Jesus was not raised Himself until the third day. The thief will be raised from the dead, along with all humanity, and the paradise of God will extend throughout the lengths and breadths of this wide world.

Christ's Kingdom will then be operating to bless all humanity who really obey Him. This is the day in which Abraham was assured "all the families of the earth would be blessed" — Gen. 22:15-18.

Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, for our Lord said so — "He saw it (by faith) and was glad" — John 8:56.

Therefore we see from the Bible that it is absolutely impossible to communicate with the departed, for "the dead know not anything." In Eccles. 9:5,10, we read — "For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything ... for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." The great theologians will claim that death does not mean death at all, but that is not what the Bible teaches. Our Lord said on one occasion that the truths of the Bible were "hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes" — Matt. 11:25,26.

Eccles. 12:7 is often used to try and imply that the spirit of the departed really goes back to God and lives with Him. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." When we understand what the "spirit" is — the gift of life, the breath of life — which returns to

God, we realize that the gift of life is again in the hands of the Creator, to be given back in the resurrection time; He will infuse it into the body which He will create. When Adam was created in Eden, God blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and “man became a living soul.” When the breath of life leaves the body at death, the gift of life returns to God who gave it, and there is no living soul. God has in His keeping the gift of life, and in the resurrection time He will implant that spirit of life into a created body, and there will be a living person again. What a wonderful salvation is the resurrection from death, because of the great sacrifice of Christ!

Acts 7:60, where we have the record of the martyrdom of Stephen, agrees fully with the above. Stephen was stoned to death, and we read — “he fell asleep” — the same as David and Solomon and all the patriarchs, and all mankind. From 1 Thess. 4 we read of Paul’s wonderful assurance concerning those who “sleep in Jesus.” Being assured of Christ’s resurrection he says — “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” — verse 14. The Thessalonians were concerned about those Christians who were asleep; they wondered what would happen to those who had passed away in death when the time came

for the Lord's second advent. Paul tells them not to be ignorant concerning those who have gone into death previously; those saints who have been faithful unto death, who are asleep in Jesus, God will bring with Jesus back from death. All the Gospel Age they are asleep, unconscious, awaiting the resurrection. Paul states his own position as being exactly the same — "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" — 2 Tim. 4:8. All the faithful ones are to receive their crowns in the resurrection day.

But what shall we say about the supposed messages from the vale of death? There is an account in 1 Sam. 28 that has given concern to some people. Verse 3 reads — "Now Samuel was dead ... And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land." Saul was obedient to the Lord in doing this, because God commanded all witches and wizards to be put out of the land. Reading through this chapter it is seen that Saul disobeyed the Lord, and the Lord rejected him. Saul approached one of these witches to get a message from Samuel, who was dead, because he was apprehensive of what was going to happen with the Philistines approaching.

Saul went to the Witch of Endor for information, as he thought, from the dead Samuel. Under the influence of evil spirits, this woman believed Samuel could be contacted. This is the basis for all the deception today in spiritualistic seances. In Genesis 6 we have a record of some of the heavenly angels taking human form. We read there — “And the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose.” They disobeyed the Lord in remaining on the earth in materialised form. They dematerialised at the time of the Flood in Noah’s day and have been restrained from appearing in human form since that time. Jude 6 confirms this matter of the wicked spirits prior to the Flood of Noah’s day, describing them as — “the angels which kept not their first estate.” These wicked angels work in darkness, even though restrained from appearing in human form. So people go to spirit mediums, to see what messages they might get supposedly from loved ones. They hear things that are true, and think they must be from the Lord. All the time it is the work of evil spirits. The deception goes on until people are captivated by it, and then it is very difficult indeed to get out of the clutches of these wicked spirits. Mediums themselves tell people that they are leading a dreadful life, for

they cannot throw off the influence of the evil spirits that captivate them. They can make money out of it, but their lives are most unhappy. Such is the deception of Satan and his wicked spirits in this present-day world. People are deceived in desiring to communicate, and the wicked spirits in impersonating the deceased give them messages that surprise them. Perhaps they tell them things that happened years ago, but the communications are evil, because they come from an evil source. We find even the governments of the day are to some extent protecting the people, in a general way; very often spirit mediums are prohibited. This is a good thing, even the powers that be protect humanity, without realizing the importance of the matter.

Peter tells us very plainly of these spirits working in the minds of people. Some people crave for mysterious things, things they think are very "deep." In 1 Pet. 3:18-20 we have an explanation of how our Lord "preached to the spirits in prison." In verse 19, the words "and went" are not in the original. Referring to our Lord, the verse should read — "By which (His death and resurrection) also he preached unto the spirits in prison." Our Lord did not "go" anywhere in death. He was

dead for parts of three days. It was by His death and resurrection that He preached; the wicked spirits could see His devotion to God for 3½ years. They saw how He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, as they said — “Himself he cannot save.” They saw Him crucified and go into death, and on the third day they saw Him rise. What a lesson — what a sermon to these spirits in prison! There is hope for the recovery of these wicked spirits, just as there is hope for the recovery of the human family. In 1 Cor. 6 Paul tells us about a judging work during the Millennial Age. With Christ and His saints on the throne to judge the world, those wicked spirits will also come into judgment with hope of recovery by obedience to Christ’s authority. 1 Cor. 6:2,3 reads — “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”

In 1 Cor. 4:9 we have an interesting statement from Paul in which he states that “we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” The meaning is, that as Christ was made a spectacle to the angels in prison, His faithful followers are also made a

spectacle. The question may be, What kind of a spectacle are we presenting to angels and to men, by the Lord's grace? This is something that comes home to all God's people. How do our thoughts, our words and our doings appear? Are they lovingly and devotedly upholding the Lord and His Word? Are our thoughts in line with the precepts of God's Word? Are our thoughts pure and holy and just and noble? "If there be any virtue, think on these things." All this is implied in being made a spectacle. We must, by His grace, seek to represent Him in the best way possible, to be an ambassador for Christ, to preach His truth on any and every opportunity, and particularly the truth in respect of the death and resurrection of Christ. The truths of God's Word really satisfy our longings as nothing else can do, and there is nothing mysterious about it. We have a booklet called "**Hope Beyond the Grave**" which explains about spiritism very helpfully from the Bible, and this is recommended to all our readers.

We can be sure of the state of the departed. Instead of desiring to communicate with departed loved ones, if they are kept in memory until the resurrection time, then all will be able to converse together. Members of the human family will rejoice together forever

by obedience to the laws of Christ's Kingdom. Surely we thank God for such a wonderful and gracious Plan provided through the death of Christ, His beloved Son, who paid the penalty that we should live through Him now, and humanity might live to His praise ultimately, for all time.

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