

IS THERE CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER DEATH

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A question is sometimes raised about whether the spirit of one who has died is conscience after it leaves the body Eccl 12:7
- B. The Scriptures show there is an intermediate state between death and the Resurrection Lk 23:43
- C. This implies that the souls of those who have died are Conscious during this interim state
- D. The question we want to consider is: are they really conscious?
- E. The idea that they are not, is sometime referred to as "soul-sleeping"

DISCUSSION:

I. THEORY OF "SOUL-SLEEPING"

- A. Souls of the dead saints continue to exist, but in an unconscious state until the resurrection
- B. Not same as doctrine held by JW's, who believe there is no consciousness until the resurrection because until then there is no existence at all

II. SCRIPTURES USE "SLEEP" REFERRING TO DEATH

- A. Scriptures which do so Matt 27:52; Jhn 11:11-14; Acts 7:60; 1Cor 15:6,18; 1Thess 4:13-16
- B. Not one of those passages says the "soul" sleeps
 - 1. It was the "person" who fell asleep or died
 - 2. So, it is a reference to the body, not the soul
- C. The term "SLEEP" can be an appropriate figurative reference, because sleep implies rest
 - 1. When one sleeps literally, there is rest from labor
 - 2. The dead also "rest from their labors" Rev 14:13
- D. Sleep implies a "ceasing of participation"
 - 1. In literal sleep, one ceases activities pertaining to sphere in which they were busy during wakefulness
 - 2. The dead are no longer active in world they left
- E. Sleep is generally a prelude to an awakening
 - 1. Literal sleep is followed by an "awakening"
 - 2. So with death: though the souls may be conscious during the intermediate state, at the resurrection there will be the "awakening" of the glorified and transformed bodies in which to house our souls
- F. Perhaps it can also be said that the term "sleep" became a euphemism for death because of the sleep-like appearance of the body

III. DO SOULS OF THE DEAD HAVE A CONSCIOUSNESS

- A. Passages which seem to say no consciousness Psa 30:9; 115:17; Eccl 9:5,10; Isa 38:18-19
 - 1. Passages are in Old Testament, when revelation of God's truth was not yet complete
 - 2. Psalms and Isaiah are the expressions of faith and understanding by those whose knowledge of God's revelation was incomplete
 - 3. Cautious developing doctrine of life after death that does not take into account what is ultimately revealed when revelation is complete
- B. In some cases, the statements are made solely from an earthly perspective
 - 1. Especially true in Ecclesiastes where the theme is "Life Under The Sun"
 - 2. Looking purely from an earthly perspective it does not appear the dead know anything. It does not appear the dead praise God
 - 3. Eccl 9:10 says nothing more than when we die, we are no longer conscious of things in this life

IV. "SOUL SLEEP" NOT IN HARMONY WITH PASSAGES TEACHING CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER DEATH

- A. Abraham, rich man, and Lazarus Lk 16:22-26
 - 1. Some believe this is only a "parable"
 - 2. Unlikely, but if so, parables used "true to life" experiences as a basis for comparison, not science fiction or fantasy!
- B. How can Paradise be a state of unconsciousness? Lk 23:42-43
- C. God of the living Lk 20:37-38 – transfiguration Matt 17:2-5, 8
- D. Can souls cry out if not conscious? Rev 6:9-11

CONCLUSION:

- A. In view of passages describing condition of souls during "intermediate" state where they are very much awake, praising and serving God, the doctrine of "soul sleeping" does not hold up
- B. Scriptures are best harmonized if we view term "sleep" in reference to death as only a figure of speech
 - 1. Naturally drawn from how the body appears at death
 - 2. Pertaining to our relationship to this earthly realm
 - a. We are at rest from labors in this life
 - b. We are not aware of what goes on in this life
 - 3. But one day, there will be an "awakening" (the resurrection), in which we will be rejoined with those who are still in this life (they too will be changed) 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Jhn 3:1-2