

the second death, the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:12-14) Think of that! All the dead who are in God’s memory have the prospect of release from Hades (Greek, *hai-des*), or Sheol, mankind’s common grave. (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31) They will have an opportunity to demonstrate by their deeds whether they will serve God. Then “death and Hades” will be hurled into what is called “the lake of fire,” symbolizing complete destruction, as does the term “Gehenna.” (Luke 12:5) The common grave of mankind itself will have been emptied and will cease to exist when the resurrection is completed. How comforting it is to learn from the Bible that God does not torture anyone!—Jeremiah 7:30, 31.

RESURRECTION TO WHERE?

¹⁹ A limited number of men and women will be resurrected to life in heaven. As kings and priests with Jesus, they will share in undoing all the effects of death that mankind inherited from the first man, Adam. (Romans 5:12; Revelation 5:9, 10) How many will God take to heaven to rule with Christ? According to the Bible, only 144,000. (Revelation 7:4; 14:1) Jehovah will give each of these resurrected ones a spirit body so that they can live in heaven.—1 Corinthians 15:35, 38, 42-45; 1 Peter 3:18.

²⁰ By far the majority of those who have died will be resurrected to a paradise earth. (Psalm 37:11, 29; Matthew 6:10) Part of the reason for resurrecting some to heaven is to complete God’s purpose for the earth. Jesus Christ and the 144,000 in heaven will progressively bring obedient mankind back to the perfection that our original parents threw away. This will include resurrected ones, as indicated by Jesus when he told the dying

19. Why will some of mankind be resurrected to heaven, and what kind of body will God give them?

20. What will be experienced by obedient mankind, including resurrected ones?

man impaled next to him: “You will be with me in Paradise.”—Luke 23:42, 43.

²¹ On the Paradise earth, death, which today produces such futility, will be removed. (Romans 8:19-21) The prophet Isaiah declared that Jehovah God “will actually swallow up death forever.” (Isaiah 25:8) The apostle John was given a vision of the time when obedient mankind will experience freedom from pain and death. Yes, “God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—Revelation 21:1-4.

²² The Bible’s clear teachings remove confusion about what happens to the dead. The Scriptures plainly state that death is “the last enemy” that will be destroyed. (1 Corinthians 15:26) What strength and comfort we can draw from knowledge of the resurrection hope! And how glad we can be that our dead loved ones who are in God’s memory will awaken from the sleep of death to enjoy all the good things he has in store for those who love him! (Psalm 145:16) Such blessings will be accomplished through God’s Kingdom. But when was its rule to begin? Let us see.

21. According to the prophet Isaiah and the apostle John, what will happen to death?

22. How does knowledge of the resurrection affect you?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What is the spirit in humans?

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How would you describe the condition of the dead?

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Who will be resurrected?

Acts 17:28) This life force does not have any of the characteristics of the creature it animates, just as electricity does not take on the features of the equipment it powers. When someone dies, the spirit (life force) ceases to animate the body cells, much as a light goes out when the electricity is turned off. When the life force stops sustaining the human body, man—the soul—dies.—Psalm 104:29; Ecclesiastes 12:1, 7.

“TO DUST YOU WILL RETURN”

⁷ Jehovah clearly explained what death would mean for the sinner Adam. God said: “In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:19) Adam would return where? To the ground, to the dust from which he had been created. At death Adam would simply cease to exist!

⁸ In this regard, human death does not differ from that of the animals. They too are souls, and the same spirit, or life force, energizes them. (Genesis 1:24) At Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20, the wise man Solomon tells us: “As the one dies, so the other dies; and they all have but one spirit, so that [in death] there is no superiority of the man over the beast . . . They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust.” Man was superior to the beasts in that he was created in God’s image, reflecting the qualities of Jehovah. (Genesis 1:26, 27) Yet, at death humans and animals alike return to the dust.

⁹ Solomon further explained what death means, saying: “The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all.” Yes, the dead know absolutely nothing. In view of this, Solo-

7. What would happen to Adam if he disobeyed God?
8. As souls, in what way are humans not superior to animals?
9. What is the condition of the dead, and where do they go?

mon urged: “All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Where do the dead go? To Sheol (Hebrew, *she’oh!*), the common grave of mankind. Our dead loved ones are not conscious of anything. They are not suffering, and they cannot affect us in any way.

¹⁰ Must all of us and our loved ones live only a few years and then cease to exist forever? Not according to the Bible. At the time of Adam’s rebellion, Jehovah God immediately instituted arrangements to reverse the terrible consequences of human sin. Death was not part of God’s purpose for mankind. (Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9) Hence, death does not have to be final for us or for our loved ones.

“GONE TO REST”

¹¹ It is Jehovah’s purpose to rescue us and our dead loved ones from Adamic death. Therefore, God’s Word refers to the dead as being asleep. For example, upon learning that his friend Lazarus had died, Jesus Christ told His disciples: “Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep.” Since the disciples did not immediately grasp the meaning of this statement, Jesus said plainly: “Lazarus has died.” (John 11:11, 14) Jesus then went to the town of Bethany, where Lazarus’ sisters Martha and Mary were mourning their brother’s death. When Jesus told Martha, “Your brother will rise,” she expressed her faith in God’s purpose to reverse the effects of death on the human family. She said: “I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.”—John 11:23, 24.

10. Why can we say that death does not have to be final?
11. How did Jesus describe the condition of his dead friend Lazarus?