

Does the Soul/Spirit continue after death?

Intro: Materialists would argue that we have no existence after death, that there is nothing to continue. The body is itself is the product of an evolutionary process and that life itself is the chance combination of chemicals regulated by physical forces like electricity. Thinking and feeling are conditioned responses of the chemicals and electrical impulses in your body. Thus, when you die you return to the elements. However last week we saw in our study that we each possess not only a body but also a soul/spirit that inhabits that body. The Bible defines and describes death as the separation of the soul or spirit from the body.

Does the soul or spirit continue existence after death?

Some religious people have denied the continued existence of the soul/spirit of man after death.

JW's martial the statements of man's equality with the animal world in death as evidence of no existence after death.

"When a person is in a very deep sleep, he remembers nothing. It is similar with the dead. They have no feelings at all. They no longer exist." (You can live forever in Paradise on earth", p. 80)

Josephus in his "Antiquities says of the Sadducees: "The doctrine of the Sadducees is this: that souls die with the bodies". Thus, Ac. 23:8 suggests that they did not believe in the resurrection or a spirit-being (like an angel or other spirit).

But if there is a part of man that is distinguishable from the body (if he possesses a dual nature), then it is possible that the spirit or soul may continue its existence after death.

What evidence suggests that the spirit continues after separating from the body?

"Gathered to your fathers"

An interesting phrase is "gathered to thy people", implying existence after death, and is made in regards to the death of...

a. Abraham - Gen 15:15, 25:8

b. Isaac - Gen 35:29

c. Jacob - Gen 49:29,33

d. Aaron - Num 20:24

e. Moses - Num 27:13; Deu 32:50

f. Josiah - 2 Kin 22:20; 2 Chr 34:28

And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. (Genesis 25:8)

Keil makes this comment: "This expression, constantly distinguished from departing this life and being buried, denotes the reunion in Sheol with friends who have gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of man after death, as a presentiment which the promises of God had exalted in the case of the

patriarch into a firm assurance of faith” (Heb. 11:13).

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

Where did these patriarchs hope to go if they had no existence after death?

The post-death appearance of Samuel

This is a fascinating story. In this passage King Saul seeks information from the prophet Samuel, who has died (v. 3). He asks a “medium” at Endor to “conjure” up Samuel so that he may speak to him. Though not by the woman’s power (v. 12), Samuel appears and talks with Saul (v. 13, 15).

And the king said to her, “Do not be afraid; but what do you see?”

And the woman said to Saul, “I see a divine being coming up out of the earth.” And he said to her, “What is his form?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage. (1 Samuel 28:13-14)

Samuel clearly existed in spirit form after his death and with God’s permission was contact by the king.

David’s hope to see his infant son

And he said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live.’ “But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” (2 Samuel 12:22-23)

From where did David get this hope? Does it not suggest his expectation that the spirit lives on after death?

The lament against the king of Babylon speaks of life after death

“Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. “They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we, You have become like us. (Isaiah 14:9-10)

Note this picture, that all the wicked dead like the king of Babylon will greet his arrival into Sheol with the statement that he has become like them.

Cf. also the prophecy against Egypt in which God pronounces that he will share the fate of many other nations like Assyria, Elam, etc., who are all consigned to the “Pit” (Eze. 32:17-32).

Jesus’ teaching regarding the afterlife

“And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

Man is both body and soul, and the soul can survive murder by a

fellow man but it cannot survive the punishment of God. Thus, the soul must continue after death in order for this punishment to take place.

Jesus' account of the rich man and Lazarus

In order to teach the important lesson of mercy toward others Jesus revealed the fate of two men, Lazarus and a rich man. Both are portrayed as having an existence after death and that while life continues on earth.

“And he said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father’s house— for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ (Luke 16:27-28)

Jesus' dispute with the Sadducees on the resurrection.

Consider Jesus' debate with the Sadducees (Mt. 22). They contended that spirits did not exist after death; therefore there could be no resurrection. But Jesus pointed them to the words of God given to Moses at the burning bush.

‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” (Matthew 22:32)

God affirmed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had existence many years after their earthly departure.

Paul could conceive of his spirit existing "out of the body" - 2 Co 12:3

Jesus' promise to the thief on the cross

And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:42-43)

If indeed Jesus intended to promise a blessing to this man, then clearly there must be some existence of the soul after death. How could the thief be with Jesus in Paradise “today”?

J.W.’s in order to avoid the force of this text punctuates to read, “I say unto you today, you will be with me in Paradise” (New World).

Apostolic statements concerning those who had died in the past

This concept of spirits continuing to exist after death, both good and evil, is supported by other NT statements:

Evil men continue to exist

Peter spoke of the "spirits in prison" who were disobedient- 1 Pe 3:18-20

Also wicked men “kept under punishment like angels who sinned (2 Pet. 2:4, 9-10)

Good men continue to exist

Hebrew writer spoke of “spirits made perfect” (Heb. 12:23).

Keep in mind that the writer’s point is to describe intangible things that are real and with which the Christian is associated by his coming to the Lord.

Peter wrote of those who are "dead, but live in the spirit" - 1 Pe 4:6

One such picture is found in Rev. 6:9-11

Apostolic statements about the future of believers

Peter's comment about his own death—2 Pet. 1:13-14 He would “lay aside” his earthly tabernacle.

Now Paul affirms that the outer man (the earthly tent) can be “torn down” yet we may exist for a time “naked” and then later “clothed” again, with an immortal body (2 Co 5:1-8)

One can “depart and be with Christ” - Ph 1:23

Conclusion: How could one in the face of all this evidence deny that we possess a soul/spirit that continues to exist after separation from our bodies and even after our bodies have perished? How could one know these things and not take serious the need to prepare for such a time.