

WHAT REALLY HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?

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A Discussion On John The Baptist, Elijah,
Resurrection, Possession And Reincarnation

A while back, a woman in Texas asked the following
interesting question:

"I have been struggling with a question I hope someone can
help me with. Was John the Baptist Elijah? And if so, do
they have one soul or two? What does this say about
reincarnation? I'd love any insight anyone has. Please
include verses."

----- End Of Quote -----

Have you ever heard someone say, 'Well, when I get to
Heaven, I am going to have a lot of questions to ask the
Lord.'? Let's face it, there are a number of things in the
Bible which, try as we might, we just can't seem to find the
answers for. We all probably have our little lists tucked
away in the back of our minds. I see nothing wrong with
this. After all, the Lord does want us to hunger and thirst
after The Truth. We are also told to study the Word of God
with diligence:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of
truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Unfortunately, in our current state, no matter how hard we
study, it seems that there are some things which are simply
beyond our limited human comprehension, things we are
apparently not meant to understand for now. It is for this
reason that we find the Lord speaking through the mouth of
the prophet Isaiah saying:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your
ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher
than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my
thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

The question put forth by the woman from Texas is one of
many which has perplexed people for almost two millenia. In
answering her inquiry, as always, it is best to go directly
to the Scriptures to see exactly what they have to say on
the matter. As in many of my other articles, I will admit
that I cannot provide a definitive answer. All I can do is
present the Scriptures I have come up with and share my
ideas and speculations for your consideration. You may or
may not agree with me. However, I believe that by the time
you have finished reading this article, you will have done
quite a bit of deep-thinking which may help you to answer
the question for yourself: What happens to us when we die?

In beginning our search, let's take a look at the Old Testament prophecies which speak of this coming Elijah (or Elias):

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."
(Isaiah 40:3-5)

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."
(Malachi 3:1)

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
(Malachi 4:5-6)

As pointed out in my article 'A Third Elijah: An Endtime Prophecy,' the 'day of the LORD' these verses are referring to is not the Lord's Second Coming at the end of the world, but rather His First Coming two thousand years ago. The ancient Jews were well aware of these prophecies, and it is for this reason that when John the Baptist appeared on the scene, they questioned him regarding his identity:

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."
(John 1:19-27)

As I explained in the previously-mentioned article, for some reason, John denied that he was Elijah. Whether this was simply due to the fact that he was a humble man, or to the fact that he was afraid of the Jews who came out to deride him, I really cannot say with any degree of certainty. Having seen now what John had to say regarding himself, let's go to Luke chapter one where the angel Gabriel is speaking to Zacharias, John's father, prior to John's birth:

"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when

Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:11-17)

This definitely seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? John clearly denies being Elijah the prophet, while the angel Gabriel clearly confirms that he is...Or does he?

As pointed out in the other article, both Jesus and the Gospel writers also confirmed that John was Elijah which was to come before the day of the Lord. Here are a few examples where Jesus confirms John's identity:

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, THIS IS ELIAS, which was for to come." (Matthew 11:9-14)

"And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him." (Mark 9:11-13)

"...What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." (Luke 7:24b-27)

What we can see then, is that despite John's denial, both Jesus, Gabriel, and the Gospel writers all confirmed that he was in fact Elijah the prophet. But that still leaves us with a question: Exactly what did they mean that he was Elijah? Did they mean that Elijah had actually come back from the dead? If we follow my practice of comparing scripture with scripture, we come up with some interesting possibilities, some of which only seem to raise more

questions. For example, one verse which strongly points against this possibility can be found in Paul's epistle to the Hebrews:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27)

Paul is very clearly stating that once you die, that is it. There is no coming back. There is no second chance. The next time you are brought back to consciousness in your physical body, it will be for your judgment. As explained in other articles, if you are a saved believer, this will be at the time of the First Resurrection:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Revelation 20:4-5)

If you are not saved, then as these verses make clear, you will not be resurrected until the Second Resurrection following the millennial (1000 year) reign of Christ and His saints:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Revelation 20:11-12)

This is the final judgment of all who have ever lived, what is commonly referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment, or more commonly, Judgment Day. This is where you are either deemed worthy of eternal life, or else you are snuffed out completely in the lake burning with fire and brimstone. This is the judgment of those who did not partake in the First Resurrection of the believers one thousand years before. It is for those who were not raised then, and apparently for those who lived on the Earth during the Millennium under the direct rule of Jesus Christ.

Based on the above verses alone, we have a strong case against certain Eastern religions which perpetuate the false concept of reincarnation. You see, because they reject the divinity of Christ and the salvation He alone can give, they have to create another belief system which will accomplish the same thing...at least so they claim. Because they reject the mercy and grace of God through His Son, they hope to achieve eternal life through a religion of works. According to the adherents of this doctrine of devils, one must be born over and over again, each time striving to improve on the errors he made in the previous life. Exactly what physical form a person takes each time he comes back is based on his prior performance. Eventually, it is hoped that

he will arrive at such a level of perfection so as to merit eternal life. It is all based on works. It is all based on ones own goodness and has absolutely nothing to do with the love, mercy or sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is a damnable lie of Satan which should be avoided at all cost.

But getting back to the issue of John the Baptist, Elijah and the resurrection of the dead, Jesus said a number of interesting things which may have a double meaning. For example, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, when the rich man is pleading with Abraham, consider what Jesus says:

"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:30-31)

When Jesus shared this parable, could He have been making a shaded reference to John the Baptist and Elijah which He knew the Jews would understand? It is a fact that the Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead...at least some of them did like the Pharisees. When King Herod first heard of Jesus, he was convinced that it was John come back from the dead:

"And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead." (Mark 6:14-16)

Again, we need to remember that at that time, as today, the Jews were expecting the prophet Elijah to return at any moment. Not only that, they were fully aware that in his lifetime, Elijah had raised the widow's son from the deathbed:

"And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth."

(1 Kings 17:17-24)

There is also the possibility that through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus was prophesying the raising of Lazarus from the dead which He hadn't performed yet. And finally, Jesus may have been making a reference to His own coming Resurrection. Whatever the case might be, we know that even after John's preaching, even after Lazarus' being raised from the dead, and even after Jesus' own Resurrection from the dead, most of the hardened religious leaders still did not believe in Him. In fact, we are told by Matthew that the Jewish chief priests and elders bribed the Roman soldiers into silence concerning the Resurrection of Jesus:

"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." (Matthew 28:11-15)

When Jesus returned to Nazareth after His forty days of temptation in the wilderness, we are told that He taught in their synagogue on the Sabbath. During that particular incident, He read from the book of Isaiah. Part of what He read was as follows:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)

Right after reading these verses, Jesus confirmed that these verses were talking about Himself when He said:

"...This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21b)

Before finally being kicked out of the synagogue and almost thrown over a cliff, one other thing Jesus said was:

"And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." (Luke 4:24-26)

Here again Jesus makes mention of Elijah. This may be yet another veiled reference to John not being accepted by his peers. At this time, John had not yet been beheaded. Having now shared a few verses, I am going to go back now and point out a few things for your consideration which may show that Jesus, Gabriel and the Gospel writers were not exactly saying that John was Elijah come back from the dead. For starters, look again at what Gabriel said in part regarding

John:

"...And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias..."

Notice that Gabriel is not necessarily saying that John is actually Elijah raised from the dead, or reincarnated in John's body; he may just be saying that John will have the same spiritual anointing as Elijah. He will be similar to Elijah in his ministry, but not actually Elijah. This is one possibility of what is meant here. Now consider also part of what Jesus read from the book of Isaiah concerning Himself:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor..."

Notice again, the similarity to what was said about John. You see, in the flesh, Jesus was just like any other man. He was human. He had the same emotions, the same weaknesses, He got tired, hungry, thirsty, etc. It was God's spiritual anointing upon Him that made Him Who He was. That is why in English we call Him Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Christ, from the Greek 'khristos' meaning 'the anointed.' God can pour this anointing upon anyone whom He chooses. He can also withdraw it at any time. What made Jesus so special is that, besides being with God in a spiritual pre-existence before the world began, (see John 1), He had the Spirit without measure as I pointed out in other articles:

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." (John 3:34)

In Jesus' case, this Spirit, this Power from on High was physically seen to descend upon Him during His baptism:

"And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him." (John 1:32)

In John's case, as shown above, we are told by Gabriel that he was filled with the Holy Ghost from birth. If we go back and read the story of Elijah and his successor Elisha, we see that God transferred this Power, this spiritual anointing from one person to another:

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him."

(2 Kings 2:11-15)

This is an interesting story indeed. Exactly what does it mean by 'The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha'? Does it mean that Elisha simply received the spiritual anointing of Elijah when Elijah ascended up into Heaven in the flaming chariot? The transfer of Elijah's mantle could be interpreted as a physical symbolism of that invisible transfer of Power. I don't believe the Power was actually in the mantle itself. Or could it mean something even deeper than that? Could it mean that Elijah's actual spirit or life force accompanied or even entered Elisha and worked with him or through him? Returning to the story of John the Baptist, could it likewise mean that he received this same anointing which had been upon these two former prophets of God?...Or that, as with Elisha, Elijah's spirit actually accompanied or even dwelled within John's physical body? Wild speculations, right? Well, maybe, and maybe not. Personally, I have always wondered about the articles which are placed before certain nouns in the Bible. I have wondered how judicious the translators were in their work. For example, just changing the word 'the' to the word 'a' can make a very big difference. To see what I mean, consider these examples:

"...and he shall be filled with THE Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb..."

"...and he shall be filled with A Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb..."

Just changing that one little word gives the verse a whole new meaning, doesn't it? Before you totally reject this idea as being utterly blasphemous, please read the rest of this article with an open mind. Perhaps I won't convince you of this possibility...or maybe I will. This brings us to another main topic of this discussion: What exactly happens to us when we die? Where do we go? What do we do? Are we conscious? One school of thought suggests that the minute a saved person dies, he or she goes directly to be with Jesus and His Heavenly Father. Some popular verses which support this view are the following:

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."
(2 Corinthians 5:8)

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9-11)

Paul seems to be saying that to give up our earthly bodies, that is, to die, is to enter the presence of the Lord. I say 'seems' because there is no time factor mentioned in the verse. We really don't know if Paul is saying this happens immediately, or if it will happen at the end of the world

during the First Resurrection. Some people who support the view of immediately going to be with the Lord, don't like to have the time factor issue pointed out to them because it weakens their argument. Reading the verse just as it is written, it can be taken either one. So by itself, it really isn't conclusive. However, the second set of verses make it quite clear that there are conscious souls (spirits) of the departed saints RESTING under the altar. They are aware, they are talking, they are clothed. We know that these are former humans and not angels or spiritual beings which have never known a physical existence, because it says that they were slain for the Word of God. So where did they come from if not from people who had died on Earth believing in the Lord? This sounds very similar to what was said to the prophet Daniel:

"But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Daniel 12:13)

Again, it is a matter of what and where this rest occurs which is a problem for most of us. The second school of thought suggests that we do not immediately go to be with the Lord. They believe that we rest in an unconscious state in the ground, in our graves, which is one of the three meanings of the word 'hell' in the Bible. It is from the Greek word 'hades.' In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word 'sheol' is used to denote the same thing. So then, 'hell' is not a place of fiery torment. It is completely different from the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. The Greek word used to describe this lake of fire is 'gehenna,' which is not the same thing as 'hades.' In fact, as I indicate in other articles, death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire. A few verses which are used to support this second view are the following. There may be more, but I am not currently aware of them:

"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." (Ecclesiastes 9:5)

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Ecclesiastes is believed by some to have been written by King Solomon while he was in a depressed state of mind. Despite the fact that he was so wise, so rich, so renowned, and had so many women in his life, he eventually reached a point where he had to sadly admit that everything he had done in his life was all vanity and didn't amount to anything. Jesus echoed these thoughts when He said:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:19-21, 24)

The fact that Solomon says 'the dead know not any thing' suggests a state of unconsciousness. The second part of the verse seems to be indicating that because they are now dead, they are forgotten by still-living mortals, thus 'neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten', that is, they receive no glory or recognition from other humans. Some suggest that Solomon is saying that the dead have no memory, that they are brain dead, but that is not what he is saying, although this is also true. The last part of the verse is the completion of the middle part, thus showing Solomon's true intention and meaning. The second verse continues the thought of the previous one. That is, that death in the grave means a total cessation of life functions, consciousness, work, etc. Combined then, these two verses give us a clear idea of what we already know about physical death. In a sense, when we sleep at night, it is a small example of what death is like. Of course, it isn't exactly the same, because our vital functions are still operating, our brain is working, we are dreaming, etc.

In looking at the New Testament again, we find a few examples where Jesus likewise referred to death as 'sleep.' For example, when He resurrected Jairus' daughter, He said:

"...Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." (Mark 5:39b)

Likewise, when Jesus raised up Lazarus, He said to the weeping Jews:

"...Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." (John 11:11b)

The Apostle Paul also referred to death as a temporary sleep in his letter to the Thessalonians when he said:

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."
(1 Thessalonians 4:14)

In his epistle to the Corinthians, he also touched on the issue of the Resurrection:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

The fact that Jesus and Paul referred to death as sleep is important because it indicates a temporary state from which we will arise. This is why, being the Lord of the Resurrection, Jesus did not look upon death as real death, but only as a temporary rest or sleep. Real death, as described by Jesus in other places in the Gospels, as well as in the book of Revelation, is the second death, the total destruction of body and soul in the lake of fire:

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy

both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
(Revelation 20:14-15)

In the above verses, the Greek word 'Gehenna' is used meaning a place of fire, and not the word 'hades' meaning the grave. So then, putting all of the above verses together, it seems that we have two conflicting views as to what happens when we die. As I have stated before, whenever there appears to be a contradiction in the Scriptures, it is not with the Scriptures themselves, but simply in our understanding of them. I believe that harmony can be brought to these two opposing views if we are willing to not be so dogmatic. Is it possible that they both might be right? In thinking and praying and asking the Lord about this, I think there is a possibility that maybe they are. What we need to remember is that we are both physical and spiritual beings. This is something I explained more in depth in the article 'The Salvation Of Animals.' Consider the creation of Adam in the book of Genesis:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7)

Notice again that Adam was a lifeless hunk of human flesh until the Lord breathed His Spirit into him. As explained in the aforementioned article, this term 'man became a living soul' may mean that Adam, the dead soul or dead body, became a living soul or living body once one of God's spirits of life came to dwell in his mortal human flesh. We each possess our own spirit from God. Our spirit is the real us which peers out through the windows of our soul, our eyes. Remember, in some places, the word 'soul' merely means our flesh bodies, while in others it is actually referring to our spirits within us. That is why making eye-to-eye contact with most people is a sensitive issue; because we can see the real person in their eyes, despite what they may be saying with their mouth.

So, if what I am speculating is true, then there really is no conflict between these two different perspectives. Consider this: When we die, our flesh body is placed in the ground where it of course rots and is returned to the elements. But what about our spirit? Is it also trapped in the ground? I don't think so. How could it be if it is a spirit? I don't believe that something spiritual in nature can be detained or impeded by something physical like a casket or earth and rock. For that matter, we should ask ourselves, can a spirit rest or sleep? Does it even need to? What I am going to suggest for your consideration is that when we die, our bodies decay in the ground while our spirit returns to be with God. By the very act of our spirit being detached from our physical body, the body indeed becomes a dead, lifeless, unconscious mass of flesh. It is not aware of anything exactly as Solomon tells us in the book of Ecclesiastes. While our body returns to the Earth from whence it came, our spirit goes to take its rest under God's

altar until the time of the First Resurrection when body and soul (or spirit) will be reunited and transformed. This makes a lot of sense to me and removes all conflict between all of these verses. Do you doubt this? If you do, you shouldn't. Here is direct proof straight from the same man who wrote the above verses:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
(Ecclesiastes 12:7)

This goes hand in hand with what God said to Adam and Eve:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'
(Genesis 3:19)

So you see, at some point during our process of creation, God gives each of us a spirit. As I have pointed out in 'The Salvation Of Animals,' our bodies are just containers, they are just vehicles for the real us which dwells inside. The minute God separates that spirit from the body, it is as dead as a doornail. If you want to know what I think about the spirit of animals, please read the aforementioned article. So you see, if we really study the scriptures diligently and ask the Lord to show us The Truth, He will. He wants to, it pleases Him to do so, and when He does, it thrills me to no end. These revelations I get while I am writing truly excite me! So again, there is absolutely no conflict in these two different views. They are each part of the whole Truth. Your body does lie unconscious in a state of rest in the Earth. In fact, it decays back into the elements of which it is made, while your spirit returns to God where it is alive and conscious and awaits patiently to be reunified with a new improved semi-physical body.

'So what about the wicked and the non-believers? What happens to them?' some may ask. Well, I can offer two answers, one of which I just got a few minute ago. Just to show you how the Lord works, I stopped typing to go to the kitchen to cut an apple for my daughter. While there, I was still thinking on the last sentence I had typed...and BOOM!...a verse I haven't heard or read in ages came into my mind...and that was followed by another...and then another, and so it goes. It was so thrilling to have the Lord show me this! As I have said many times throughout my articles, sometimes I write by blind faith. I don't know all of the answers. I don't pretend to know all of the answers. I am learning as I write sometimes. As I pour out to others, the Lord pours into me and teaches me as well. So then, what are the two possibilities concerning the fate of the wicked or non-believers? Here is the one I initially wrote. I will follow it with the new possibility I received a minute ago: Perhaps another method is used when they die. Perhaps their spirits aren't allowed to rise up to the altar of God. If the rebellious angels from Noah's day, (The Watchers), are trapped in some kind of prison of darkness, (derived from the Greek word 'tartaros'), as mentioned by Peter, is it not possible that the spirits of the unbelievers and wicked are likewise imprisoned in the same, or in a similar place? As I

have suggested previously in other articles, perhaps God's spiritual abyss or prison has different levels and sections depending upon the severity of the sin or crime. As a possible confirmation of this, think again on what happened to the spirits called 'Legion' which Jesus cast out of the man from the country of the Gadarenes:

"And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked." (Luke 8:30-33)

Notice what these evil spirits were afraid of: they specifically asked Jesus not to send them to 'the deep'. What is this 'deep'? Is it the same thing as 'tartaros'? Is it the same abyss where the fallen angels are located? Is it the bottomless pit of the book of Revelation? Or is it simply referring to the depth of the nearby lake? Quite a few people are convinced that this abyss or prison is in fact in the depths of the Earth, both under land and in the sea. Who knows, maybe there are even places in particular like Loch Ness or the Marianas Trench. I really don't know for sure, but those places are some of the deepest in the world on land and in the sea. Maybe the Bermuda Triangle, or 'Devil's Triangle' is even one of them as some folks believe. Regardless of what your personal belief might be on this issue, one thing we do know is that Jesus cunningly gave these demons their wish, and instead commanded them to leave the man and enter the herd of swine...which ended up running over a cliff and into the lake anyway drowning themselves. This leaves us with one final question regarding this story: We know that demons are parasites. They require human hosts to abode in as well as to do their dirty work. So, when the swine ran over the cliff, were the demons trapped in 'the deep' anyway?...Or did they escape in the nick of time and begin looking for a new flesh home to dwell in? It is quite possible. Remember what Jesus also said:

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." (Matthew 12:43-45)

If nothing else, these verses should serve to show us how serious of a spiritual battle we are involved in. These demons want and need human bodies to operate in and through. Thank God we believers are saved and sealed, (baptized), by God's Holy Spirit. But think about the people in the world who don't even believe in things spiritual anymore. They have absolutely no idea what they are leaving themselves

open to when they reject the Lord...and the Antichrist will be the most demon-possessed and demon-inspired human of all time, for he will literally be Satan incarnate!

Well, as normally happens, we are getting into some rather deep subjects which I had no intentions of getting into when I began this article. I had just planned on further discussing John the Baptist and Elijah. I honestly never know where things are going to end up. I just try to follow the flow of the Spirit and the verses that come to me in the course of doing that. Now, if you are not willing to accept the idea of a prison for the departed spirits of wicked or unsaved humans, then let me offer the possibility which came to me while in the kitchen: Assuming that you are at least willing to consider, or perhaps have already accepted this concept of our lives being a union of soul and body, that is, spirit and body, the following verse I received makes a lot of sense. In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul is discussing the gift of prophecy. In one place he says as follows:

"And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." (1 Corinthians 14:32)

What does he mean by this? Simply that when a person prophesies, they not only have control over what comes out of their mouth, but they also have control over when they should speak, and when they shouldn't. This is why in the very next verse Paul says:

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." (1 Corinthians 14:33)

What this tells us is that we have control over our spirits, and not vice versa. If it were the other way around, then this would totally negate our freedom of personal choice which is a very important part of God's overall plan, as I have discussed elsewhere. Exactly how does this process of choice come into play? Again, the Bible offers a very clear answer in the following verses:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
(Romans 8:7)

Allow me to make a clarification regarding the second verse. It is not only speaking of our brain per se, although this is part of it. According to the Greek, it is referring to our dwelling on the things of the flesh as opposed to the things of the spirit, being carnally minded instead of spiritually minded, putting on the mind of Christ as Paul called it. Of course, we use our brains and the desires of our hearts in our thinking process. It almost seems as if Jeremiah is saying that our hearts are a thinking organ. If our heart is simply an organ which pumps blood, how could it possibly be wicked and deceitful? Some folks also view this verse as referring to the seat of our spirit, our navel, the solar plexus. Notice that Paul says that the carnal mind is

enmity, it is against, it is the enemy of God. He says that it is not subject to the law of God. In other words, because of the way God has set things up, because He has given us free will in the flesh, our flesh is not subject to His will of its own accord. We have to consciously choose to obey the Lord. There are only two times when our mind and our flesh are not in control, and that is either when we consciously allow the Lord's spirit in us to subject them to the will of God, or else when a person is demonically oppressed or possessed. In the latter case, an evil spirit has overpowered and invaded the body and the mind. The person no longer controls himself. Possibly due to some sin in his life, he has allowed Satan, or more realistically, one or more of his demons, to come in and wreak total havoc on and through his flesh. As cited earlier, there are plenty of examples in the Gospels regarding this.

So how does all of this relate to what happens to the wicked and the non-believers after death but prior to their resurrection? Well, if we realize that it is our heart, our mind, our flesh which is in rebellion against God and not necessarily our spirit which came from God to begin with, then it would make sense that a person's evil flesh would rot in the ground while his spirit might still return to God...probably quite thankful to be delivered from such a vile corruptible form to which it had been subjected:

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Romans 8:22-23)

This all relates to what I said in another article regarding how new born babies seem to be so sweet and innocent. In fact, they are. Jesus said so Himself in the story of the children who came to Him. They were innocent in their faith, and they hadn't been corrupted yet by the things of the world as their parents had been. Babies possess spirits newly entered into our world of the material. It is only with time that the evil flesh seeks to corrupt and dominate the spirit which God has given us. That may be why it seems we become aliented from God as we get older. We allow our flesh and the things of the world to crowd out our spirit, to starve it into submission so-to-speak. As I have also stated before, there is a continual war going on in our minds and in our flesh. Our body is the battlefield of the spirit where good and evil forces fight for dominance:

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1)

James wasn't just talking about in-fighting between the brethren; he was also talking about the spiritual warfare going on within our own bodies and within our own minds. This is why he said a few verses later that the way to win the battle is to submit ourselves, our flesh, our wills, our spirits, to God:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and

he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

Paul spoke of the very same thing as I have pointed out a number of times before in other articles:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

In light of these things, let's take a look at a verse from Jude regarding the 'death' of Moses:

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." (Jude 1:9)

Moses faithfully served the Lord for the final eighty years of his life. Do you think it was easy? Probably not. He was human. He suffered the same things as we do. He was tempted as we are tempted. Who knows, maybe in moments of doubt, or when the hardhearted Hebrews were giving him a rough time, he may have thought back on the lush life he had left in Egypt. After all, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells us:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Many of us have grown up with the 'Charlton Heston/Ten Commandments' image of Moses. The fact of the matter is, he was every bit as human as we are. I am sure he had to wage a spiritual battle against the enemy everyday of his life just as we do. He had to make a conscious choice to continue to obey and submit himself and his aging body to God every day of his life. As Paul said, 'I die daily.' (1 Corinthians 15:31)

If you the reader are willing to consider this separation of body and soul (spirit) at death, then this may even help to clear up a few other incidents in the Bible. For example, perhaps you are familiar with the story of Saul and the witch of Endor. The prophet Samuel had already died and old rebellious King Saul found himself in a fix. It seems that the Philistines were hot on his tail. By this time, the Lord had already rejected Saul as being king, so when Saul sought the Lord for some advice, the Lord didn't even answer him. In his desperation, Saul sought out a witch or sorceress, what the Bible refers to as a woman with a familiar spirit, or a woman of divination. Notice what Saul asks her to do and what happens afterwards:

"Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul,

saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do." (1 Samuel 28:11-15)

After this, Samuel then goes on to pronounce God's judgments against Saul and tells him that the very next day he and his sons will die in battle. While we may be tempted to consider that perhaps this really wasn't the spirit of Samuel, maybe it was a demon conjured up by this witch, that doesn't seem to be the case. This really was the prophet Samuel. Saul and the witch both recognized him as such. As Moses had said many years before:

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

The prophet Ezekiel likewise stated:

"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." (Ezekiel 33:33)

In the case of Saul and the woman with a familiar spirit, what Samuel prophesied, did in fact come to pass. Not only that, Samuel told the woman who Saul really was since he had disguised himself. A demon would certainly not tell Saul the truth. After all, Jesus said that Satan and his minions are liars:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)

So the question arises, if Samuel's body has been buried in Ramah for some time, (see verse 3), and has probably already rotted, how is it that this woman can bring up his spirit? And where did she bring up his spirit from? The above verses say she 'brought him up' and that she saw 'gods ascending out of the earth.' Does that mean that both Samuel's body and spirit are resting in the Earth? I really don't know for certain, but going by previous verses we've looked at, I don't see how that can be. If Samuel's spirit is still with his body, then I would think that his body would still be alive. Perhaps what really happened is that the Lord permitted him to descend from beneath His altar where the

spirits are resting. Notice that Samuel did ask Saul, 'Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?' So Samuel was resting somewhere. The only place we find a resting of spirits is in the book of Revelation under the altar of God.

That spirits can come and go from the presence of the Lord, there can be no doubt. Perhaps you will recall the story I have shared in other articles regarding the lying spirit which the Lord sent to speak in the mouths of the false prophets of King Ahab. In that incident, after a bit of heavenly counselling, one particular spirit chose of his own accord to perform this task for the Lord:

"And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so." (1 Kings 22:20-22)

The book of Job is another primary example of how spirits, both good and evil come and go from the presence of the Lord, including Satan himself. This brings us up to one final incident I wish to talk about from the New Testament which will tie all of these different pieces of the puzzle together. Most of us are familiar with the story of the Mount of Transfiguration. It is mentioned by three of the Gospel writers. Here is the gist of the incident:

"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." (Matthew 17:1-8)

Remember, the above incident occurred before Jesus' death and Resurrection. That means that if He is the Firstfruits of the Resurrection, no one had been resurrected yet. Despite this fact, in three Gospels we have both Moses and Elijah plainly identified as being very much alive, at least in spirit form. There are only two possibilities here: First, the Lord manipulated time and space and whisked Peter, James and John off into the future either after His own Resurrection, (at which time many of the saints arose), or possibly even as far as the First Resurrection at the end of the world to see these two patriarchs, or second, Moses and Elijah descended from under the altar of God to assist not only Jesus, but John the Baptist as well in their

ministries. An interesting fact here which some of you are already aware of, is that, as far as we know, there are only three people in the entire Bible who did not face physical death: Enoch, Moses and Elijah. Now, some may argue, well, wait a minute...aren't we told that Moses died on the top of Mount Nebo/Pisgah? Yes we are. Here are all the verses which speak of Moses' death:

"Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:" (Deuteronomy 32:49-50)

"So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."
(Deuteronomy 34:5-6)

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."
(Jude 1:9)

There are a few interesting things I'd like to point out here. First of all, the first five books of the Bible, commonly known as the Pentateuch, are believed to have been written by Moses. Now, if Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, the very book in which he dies, what did he do, write his own obituary before he died? Possibly, but it seems more likely that someone else added this on at a later date. I cannot prove this, but I can't see any other alternatives. Is it possible that whoever wrote this was ASSUMING that this is what happened since this is what the Lord had told Moses only a few chapters before? What if what the Lord really meant by 'die' was that He was going to take Moses, just as Enoch had also walked with the Lord and was not because God took him?:

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24)

Notice that neither Enoch's body nor Moses' body were ever found. In like manner, neither was the body of Elijah because he also experienced an instant translation into the spirit world...whatever that means. <grin> The only thing we have to contend with is the fact that Jude says that the Archangel Michael contended with Satan for the body of Moses. Does this imply that Moses died a natural physical death, or is it simply referring to the spiritual battle waged for Moses during his physical lifetime as I suggested previously? I must admit that I have always been curious as to where Jude obtained such profound information. He is the only one who makes mention of it in the entire Bible. If the account in Deuteronomy is correct, who is the 'he' who buried Moses? Did the Lord come down and bury him?...Or did one of His other angelic agents? As I have explained in other articles, the Lord still dealt in a very direct manner

with His creations in those days. Considering what Jude says, it is also possible that the job of burying Moses' body was assigned to Michael. This would go along with what we find in the book of Daniel regarding Michael being the protector of the ancient Hebrews:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

We know from a number of verses throughout the Bible that Michael is a great warrior for the Lord. As shown in some of my Endtime articles, he also battles with Satan the Red Dragon and a third of the angels who have turned against the Lord in the book of Revelation. Please see those articles for more details.

So then, if Moses did die a natural death as some of these verses seem to indicate, the incident on the Mount of Transfiguration seems to add weight to the argument that when one experiences death, the body and spirit experience a separation, just as they were first united at conception, or at whatever point God sends a spirit to inhabit a new body. Being as the First Resurrection hadn't taken place yet, this is the only way to explain how Moses could appear with Elijah and Jesus...unless you accept my other theory that the Lord opened up a vortex in the space/time continuum and took Peter, James and John through it to right after His own Resurrection when many of the departed saints were seen throughout Jerusalem:

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matthew 27:52-53)

Remember too that Luke specifically tells us that not only were Peter, James and John overshadowed by this 'bright cloud,' but that they also feared as they ENTERED INTO THE CLOUD.' As I have theorized in my article 'Under The Cloud: UFO's And The Bible,' maybe this 'cloud' was the shekinah glory,' a by-product of opening a vortex in the time/space continuum...or maybe it was a genuine celestial craft or time machine of some sort.

At any rate, in the case of Moses, maybe his physical body had rotted thousands of years before, but as the verses from Revelation chapter six indicate, his spirit ascended to rest under the altar of God until his body and spirit could be reunited. Another clue which seems to verify this ability of angelic spirits or departed spirits to traffic to and from the Earth can be found in something which Jesus said to Nathanael:

"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." (John 1:51)

To summarize then what I believe may happen to us at the moment of physical death, at least to those who die before the Lord's Second Coming, I offer these two possibilities: First, either we are physically and spiritually unconscious in the Earth 'resting' until the day of our Resurrection, or second, our body rots in the ground while our spirit ascends to the altar of God in a conscious state waiting for the day when the Lord will reunite our spirit and body in a new semi-material superboddy. It is in this new body that we will return to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years. After all, it will be a very physical rule on Earth. I believe that people will be able to see us, just as in other articles I have explained how Jesus' disciples were able to see, touch, talk with, and eat with Him after His Resurrection. They will be physical bodies with amazing properties. Of course, as we know, those who haven't died by the time Christ returns will not suffer death so-to-speak. They will be immediately transformed into their new celestial bodies:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

Before covering the final topic in this article, there is one other issue I wish to briefly discuss which does have me perplexed. As I showed from previous verses in Matthew, there was a Resurrection of the dead following Jesus' own Resurrection almost two thousand years ago. This being the case, why is it that in the book of Revelation John refers to the Resurrection of the righteous as the First Resurrection? Shouldn't this be more technically classified as the Second Reurrection, and then the one a thousand years after that as the Third Resurrection? If Jesus is the Firstfruits, as I have already pointed out, wouldn't those who arose with Him be the Firstfruits as well? Now, we know that when John received his revelation, he was told:

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;"
(Revelation 1:19)

This verse seems to indicate that John was to write of

'things thou hast seen', (past), 'things which are', (present in his time), and 'things which shall be hereafter' (future). It is in trying to understand which events correspond to which time periods that has resulted in so many different interpretations by modern eschatologists. Each one claims to have discovered the right interpretation. Personally, I find this attitude a bit dangerous, if not a bit haughty. We are all subject to error because we are all human, myself included. It is for this reason that I have made it clear in my articles as well as at the web site that one thing you can look forward to is change. If I find out that I was wrong regarding a certain viewpoint, or not exactly on the mark, or maybe a little mixed up on an issue, I won't hesitate to go back and correct an article...and I have done this as some of you know.

At any rate, this whole idea of a Resurrection at Jesus' own Resurrection bothers me. Surely it can't be the Resurrection which John was referring to as the First Resurrection. After all, if it was, then that means that the Millenium has already occurred, that the Second Resurrection has already occurred, that the White Throne Judgment has already occurred, etc. Obviously, none of this has happened yet. If it has, where does that leave us? This current existence certainly isn't Heaven on Earth, and it isn't the Lake of Fire either...although some will readily agree that this life can indeed be hell on Earth...and will become moreso in the future. So regarding this Resurrection of the first century, I have only been able to come up with a few explanations. First, maybe it wasn't a general Resurrection but something that was limited in scope for only certain individuals who were needed in the spirit world for special tasks. In this light, maybe this is why John spoke of the Resurrection at the time of Christ's Second Coming as the First Resurrection. Not only will it be the first MAJOR Resurrection, but it will also be the first of two Resurrections towards the end of all things. Even if this reasoning is correct, I am still bothered by these verses in Matthew chapter twenty-seven. One would think that this Resurrection in Jerusalem would have been considered a major event by the other writers of the New Testament, yet no one else seems to mention it anywhere except for Matthew; not Mark, not Luke, not John, not Peter, nor James, nor Jude, nor Paul. Why is this?

One verse which seems to cast even more doubt on this issue can be found in the book of Daniel where one of the angelic messengers is giving a final word of advice to Daniel:

"But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."
(Daniel 12:13)

Notice that the messenger tells Daniel that he will stand in his lot, or be resurrected, 'at the end of the days.' This seems to be referring to the end of the world at Christ's Second Coming, and not to a Resurrection in the First Century as described by Matthew. Of course, as I have also mentioned in a few other articles, in a technical sense, the beginning of the end of days began in the first century with Christ's Sacrifice and Resurrection. You could now say that

we are living in the end of the end of days. Still though, I am bothered by the limited reporting on this event. I have gone as far as to consider that perhaps these particular verses may have been written later by another party, just as some have suggested the same for the closing verses in the Gospel of Mark. I honestly don't know the answer to this one and am open for comments.

The last issue we need to tie up in this article concerns John the Baptist and Elijah. As I stated earlier in this paper, there are only a few possibilities to explain what was meant by John being Elijah: Either John simply had the same anointing and power as Elijah of old, or the actual spirit of Elijah was permitted to descend from the altar of God to assist John from the spirit world, or lastly, the very same spirit which had inhabited the physical body of Elijah the prophet hundreds of years before, and then Elisha his successor, was now inhabiting the body of John the Baptist, or at least temporarily possessing him or using his body as a vehicle. While the idea of possession may at first seem repulsive, and possibly even demonic to some conservative Christians, stop and think about the following for a moment:

The Bible has clear examples of multiple spiritual possession. Unfortunately, the only ones I can think of were demonic in nature. For example, consider the story of 'Legion':

"And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea." (Mark 5:2-13)

Notice that in addition to having his own spirit which sustained his physical body, this man was possessed, not just by one, but by many devils which went by the name of Legion. These spirits had taken physical control of this man's body. In our modern day and age, this is referred to by the nice scientific term of 'schizophrenia.' This is clearly a spiritual disease brought about by more than one spirit inhabiting the same body. Another example of demonic

possession can be found in the book of Acts concerning the seven sons of Sceva:

"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

(Acts 19:13-16)

If we go back to the Old Testament, in addition to the lying spirit of 1 Kings 22, which controlled the tongues of the false prophets, we also have the story of King Saul who was plagued by an evil spirit which David had to pacify. Rather than a case of full possession as in the above examples, it may be that Saul was only oppressed by an evil spirit:

"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." (1 Samuel 16:14-15, 23)

In relating these various stories, I am trying to emphasize a point here: if these evil spirits are permitted to oppress, (overpower from without), or possess, (take over from within), certain individuals, isn't it possible that God's good spirits may be able to do likewise? Of course, in this case, instead of being evil oppression; it would be more akin to benign assistance, perhaps what we often refer to as guardian angels, those who hover about us protecting us and offering spiritual guidance. As pointed out in other articles, we know that these beings do exist, and that they do intervene in human affairs when the Lord requires it of them. The Bible is full of a number of examples such as the story I related in another article concerning the Divine Assistance Joshua received when he went against the city of Jericho:

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

(Joshua 5:13-15)

This goes hand in hand with a verse which I have oft quoted before and which I myself use in nightly prayer:

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear

him, and delivereth them." (Psalms 34:7)

A few other which come to mind are the following:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," (Hebrews 12:1)

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:2)

What is really interesting about the above verses is that in Hebrews chapter eleven, we have Paul naming off a list of the heroes of faith from the Old Testament. In the beginning of chapter twelve he continues his ideas by telling us that these departed saints encompass us about in a great spiritual cloud of witnesses; and in the very next chapter he tells us that some have been visited by angels without even knowing it. I don't know how many people have made this connection. Because the Bible has been broken down into chapters and verses for us by the translators, sometimes the ideas don't quite flow as they should unless you learn to read without paying attention to the divisions.

As I have also previously pointed out, Jesus did make specific mention of the guardian angels of children when He said:

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

As some of you know, the very meaning of the word 'angel' is messenger. A messenger is one who goes back and forth delivering or doing something for someone else. In this case, the angels go to and fro between the Throne of God and humanity lending assistance and guidance, or performing acts of judgment and chastisement. Think again on one of the verses I shared earlier concerning what Jesus said to Nathanael:

"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." (John 1:51)

Could this be exactly what Moses and Elijah were doing? After all, they were speaking to Jesus concerning His soon coming death. If they were dead and buried in the ground for thousands of years, how could they do this?...Unless, as I have said, both Moses and Elijah made a direct transition to the spirit world by-passing the 'cocoon stage' in the ground?:

"And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."
(Luke 9:30-31)

As we have seen, this traffic of spiritual messengers or angels can be either for evil or for good depending upon the

Lord's purposes. The opposite of a demonic possession might be referred to as a benign possession or 'stepping-in' in order to perform a task or mission for the Lord. Again, perhaps this is what is meant when we read that John the Baptist was Elijah. He received the power and anointing of Elijah because the same spirit which had dwelt within Elijah, temporarily 'stepped into' John's physical body. If not that, then Elijah assisted John from without encouraging and empowering him. This is what both Moses and Elijah did with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, so why not with John the Baptist as well? Remember, we are never told exactly who sent John to preach the baptism of repentance. We have always assumed that it was the Lord who appeared to him; but could it be that the Lord sent Elijah instead?

In conclusion, I have provided solid Biblical proof that such incidents of spiritual influence or possession do occur. Jesus dealt with the negative ones on quite a few occasions. No matter how conservative your views may be as a Christian, you cannot deny that such incidents have and do occur. We must remember that Satan is an imitator and a copycat. He steals the Lord's ideas and methods and uses them for his own evil purposes. There is nothing original about him. I don't think we should try to limit God as to what He can and cannot do, or what He will or will not do. Remember, His ways are past finding out:

"Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." (Job 9:10)

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33)

It is not up to us to try to put God in a box. If God can send an evil spirit, why not a good one or several good ones as well? I honestly do not know with any degree of certainty exactly how these things operate. All I know is that Jesus said that John the Baptist was Elijah who was prophesied to come. Gabriel said John would go forth in the power and spirit of Elijah. Elijah just happens to show up on the Mount of Transfiguration. There is a connection here. I have offered some ideas for you to ponder. What is your opinion? The truth may be stranger than fiction. I trust that this article has been a blessing for you and, that it has hopefully answered a few questions as well.

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