

## Does the Soul Go Directly to Heaven at Death?

by Douglas Hoff

Based on what Jesus said to his apostles we can know that the soul of man does not go directly to heaven at death.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also." (John 14:2,3; KJV).

Let's examine this passage from the commonly held view that souls DO go directly to heaven at the time of death. If this assumption were true, then Jesus lied! He told the apostles that he was going away to prepare a place for them in his Father's house. After his resurrection he would leave their presence (cf. John 16:28) by ascending to be with his Father (Acts 1:9-11). He also promised he would come again and receive the apostles to himself so that where he is they could be also. Where is Jesus right now? In heaven. Thus, the souls of the apostles can not yet be in heaven. If they were, he would not have to come for them!

Paul revealed what will happen when Jesus comes back. He taught them:

(1 Thess. 4:13-17; NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. {14} For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. {15} For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. {16} For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Those who had fallen asleep are the Christians who died before Paul's letter had arrived. Sleep is used figuratively to speak of death. The body will lie motionless in the grave because the spirit and soul has left. It is only the body that is spoken of as sleeping, never the soul. Jesus taught that after death the souls of the rich man, Lazarus and Abraham were conscious of their surroundings (Luke 16:19-31). That hardly sounds like being asleep!

Souls departed from the body will reside in the Hadean world, not heaven (Luke 16:23; Acts 2:27,31; ASV or NKJV). At the last day Hades will be emptied as those souls prepare to obtain an immortal body in the resurrection (Rev. 20:13,14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-54; John 5:28,29). When Jesus comes back the dead in Christ will rise first. For a dead

body to live again its spirit must re-enter it. This must be true since James said that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26; cf. Gen. 2:7). Likewise, Luke described the resurrection of the twelve year old girl by saying "her spirit returned, and she arose immediately" (Luke 8:42,55).

Even the death of Jesus proves one's soul does not go directly to heaven at death. When Jesus died his body was buried but his soul could not be held by Hades (Acts 2:24,27). His soul had to leave Paradise (Luke 23:43) so his body could be raised back to life. After he was resurrected, Jesus told Mary not to cling to him because he had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:16,17). If at death his soul had gone directly to heaven, how could he say such a thing to Mary? He could not.