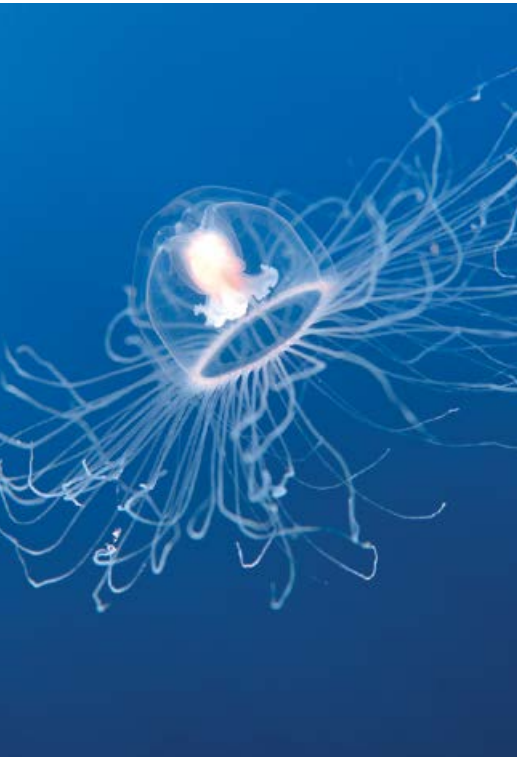


9

Blessed Are the Dead



“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’” (Revelation 14:13).

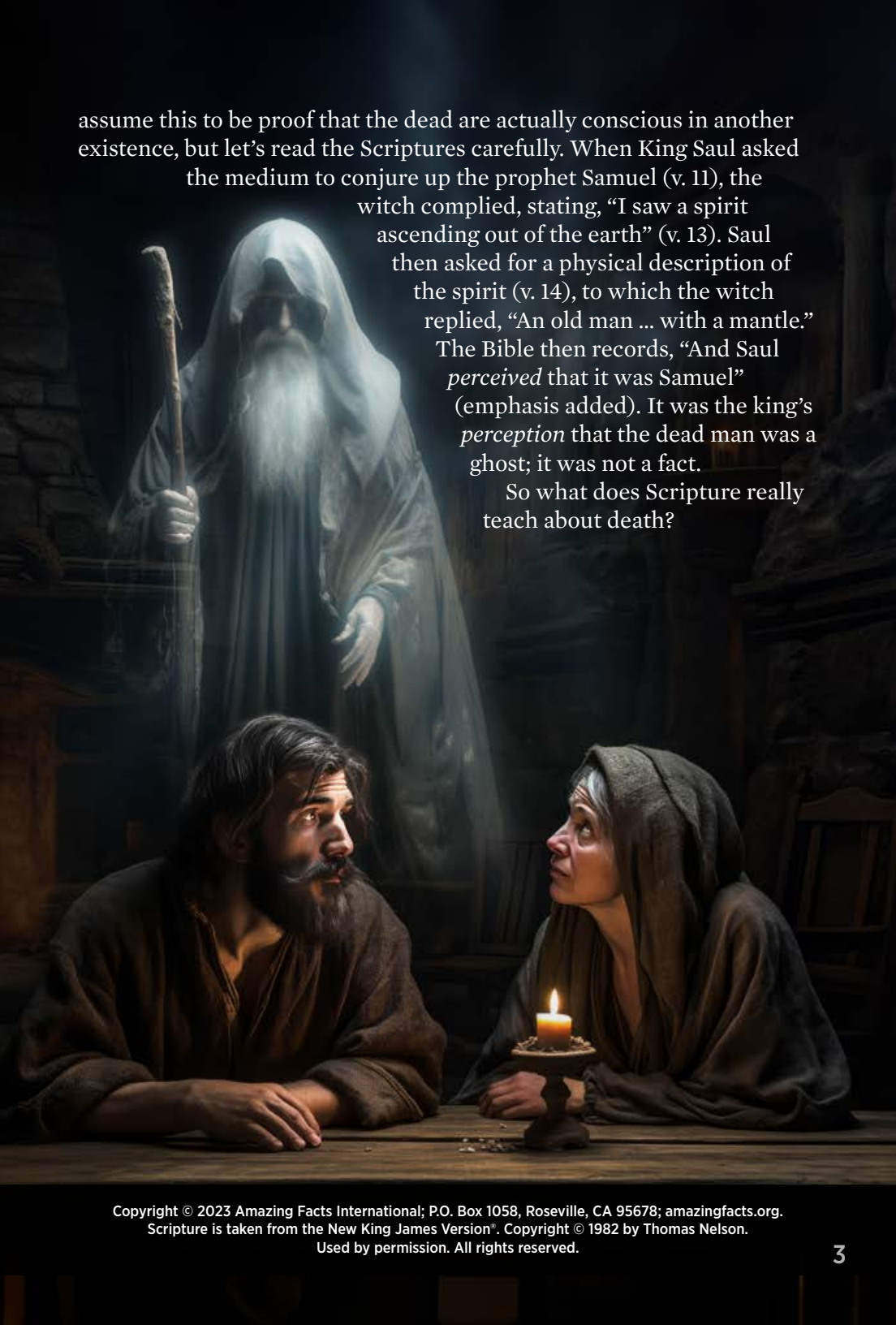


An Amazing Fact: *Turritopsis dohrnii*, a species of jellyfish, is also known as the “immortal jellyfish” because of its remarkable ability to regenerate its cells. It does this through the process of transdifferentiation, which alters the state of the cells and transforms them into new types of cells. Technically, these creatures are able to constantly renew their cells so that they never die of old age.

Throughout history, people have been fascinated with the afterlife. Many faiths, ancient and modern, teach that the dead are not really dead—but live on in some other realm. Even today, the popular belief among many Christians is that the faithful dead are now in heaven and the lost are in hell.

This idea has been reinforced by a phenomenon known as near-death experiences (NDE). Common NDE sensations include leaving one’s own body; moving through a tunnel toward a bright light; or meeting dead relatives, otherworldly beings, or even someone who claims to be Buddha, Krishna, or Jesus. A person usually reports these occurrences after being resuscitated. But did you know that several rigorous studies have shown that NDEs are the result of hallucinations that occur when the brain is robbed of oxygen? It begs the question: Should our understanding of the afterlife be based on personal experiences or scriptural truth?

Consider the singular account in the Bible of an evil king who visited a medium in order to talk to a dead prophet (1 Samuel 28). Many



assume this to be proof that the dead are actually conscious in another existence, but let's read the Scriptures carefully. When King Saul asked the medium to conjure up the prophet Samuel (v. 11), the witch complied, stating, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth" (v. 13). Saul then asked for a physical description of the spirit (v. 14), to which the witch replied, "An old man ... with a mantle." The Bible then records, "And Saul *perceived* that it was Samuel" (emphasis added). It was the king's *perception* that the dead man was a ghost; it was not a fact.

So what does Scripture really teach about death?



When you see a blank, look up the passage in your Bible and write in the missing word.

1. What is the definition of “death”?

2 Kings 20:1. You shall die, and _____ live.

ANSWER: Death is defined as not being alive. The Scripture teaches that when a person dies, they have no consciousness. “In that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:4 KJV).

2. Do the dead come back to converse with or haunt the living?

Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10. The living know that they will die; but the dead know _____, and they have no more reward. ... Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now _____; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under

the sun. ... There is no _____ or _____ or _____ or _____ in the grave where you are going.

ANSWER: No, the dead do not come back to converse with the living. Ghosts, as popular culture has defined them—the conscious essence of dead people—do not exist. A dead person does nothing and knows nothing. And given the definition of death, how can he? A dead person is not alive. (See also Job 7:9, 10; Psalm 6:5; 115:17.)

3. What happens at death?

Ecclesiastes 12:7. Then the dust will _____ to the earth as it was, and the spirit will _____ to God who gave it.

ANSWER: To fully understand this verse, we need to study the beginning of mankind’s existence. The Bible says, “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 being” (Genesis 2:7). So humans were made by a combination of “dust,” or earth, and God’s breath.

Now look again at Ecclesiastes 12:7. What takes place at death is the opposite of what happened at creation. The two components are uncombined: The dust, which is our physical body, becomes part of the earth again, and the breath of life goes back to its source, which is God. The word “spirit” here is just another word for “breath,” not some disembodied consciousness. (See also Job 33:4; Psalm 104:29, 30; 146:4; James 2:26.)

Notice that we have no life in and of ourselves, but that it is God who gives otherwise inanimate matter life.

4. Where do the dead go when they die?

Job 21:32. *Yet he shall be brought to the _____, and a vigil kept over the _____.*

ANSWER: The dead aren’t transported to heaven or hell—or any other ethereal existence—after they die. They don’t go anywhere except to what we generally refer to as the grave, or the place where the dead are buried.

The apostle Peter confirmed this, using Israel’s illustrious King David as an example: “Let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ... For David did not ascend into the heavens” (Acts 2:29, 34). David’s body, like the rest of the dead, is in the grave. (See “The Thief on the Cross” at the end of this lesson.)



5. Do the dead ever come back to life?

John 5:28, 29. *The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the _____ of life, and those who have done evil, to the _____ of condemnation.*

ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the dead remain in their graves until Christ commands them otherwise. As Christ declared in Revelation 1:18, “I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Only Jesus can unlock death and give a person the breath of life once more.

This passage also gives insight into *when* the dead will be raised to life. They will be separated into two groups that are resurrected at different times. Notwithstanding a few exceptions (2 Kings 2:11; Matthew 27:52, 53; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 9), the saved will be raised “to the resurrection of life,” the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5, 6) at Christ’s second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16); the lost will be raised “to the resurrection of condemnation,” the second resurrection a “thousand years” later (Revelation 20:5). (See also Hebrews 11:32–40.)

The important point is that neither the righteous nor the wicked dead are alive in any way now, neither in heaven nor in hell—and they won’t be until after Christ returns.



6. How does the Bible repeatedly refer to death?

John 11:11, 13, 14. *Our friend Lazarus _____, but I go that I may wake him up. ... However, Jesus spoke of his _____, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in _____. Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is _____.”*

Matthew 27:52. *The graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen _____ were raised.*



1 Thessalonians 4:14. *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who _____ in Jesus.*

Job 14:12. *So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their _____.*

ANSWER: The Bible consistently refers to death as a sleep. Death is a state of dreamless sleep, during which the passing of time is not perceived. We close our eyes in death, and the next time we awaken will be at Christ's call. It will seem to us like an instant, whether we are in the grave for thousands of years or just days. That's why Revelation 14:13 describes death as a "rest." (See also Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12.)

7. But isn't it true that the soul is immortal and only the body dies?

Ezekiel 18:4. *The soul who sins shall _____.*

Job 4:17. *Can a _____ be more righteous than God?*

Matthew 10:28. *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to _____ both soul and body in hell.*

1 Timothy 6:15, 16. *The King of kings and Lord of lords, who _____ has _____.*

ANSWER: First of all, what is a soul? Let’s compare the King James and New King James versions of Genesis 2:7 to find out:

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 *being* (NKJV, emphasis added).

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* (KJV, emphasis added).

A soul is simply a being, a creature. (See, for example, the King James Version of Joshua 10:28; Acts 27:37; and Revelation 16:3.) In other words, human beings don’t *have* souls; they *are* souls. The Bible never uses the term “soul” to describe a spirit that detaches from a body at death. Rather, a soul is the combination of the two components that make up a living creature, in this case, a human being. And human beings are mortal. Thus, as the Bible says, souls can die. The widely accepted teaching of an immortal soul is a manmade doctrine not found in the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible says that the only Being with inherent immortality is God.



8. Will human beings ever be given immortality?

1 Thessalonians 4:16. *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 _____ in Christ will _____ first.*

1 Corinthians 15:52, 53. *For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised _____, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on _____, and this mortal must put on _____.*

ANSWER: “The dead in Christ,” that is, the saved, will be given immortality when they are resurrected at the Second Coming. They do not have immortality now. The Bible is clear on the sequence; “For as in

Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22, 23). Nowhere in Scripture does it state that the lost, the wicked, ever receive immortality. Remember, "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). All unrepentant sinners will die, not live forever in an eternally burning hell.

As God told Adam and Eve after they sinned, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). God then evicted mankind from the Garden of Eden, "lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (v. 22). The consequence of our fall into sin was that we would no longer have immortality. If we do not accept the plan of salvation offered by Christ, death remains our fate.

9. So if the dead cannot converse with the living, who or what did the witch conjure up for King Saul?

Revelation 16:13, 14. *And I saw three unclean spirits. ... They are _____ of _____, performing signs.*

ANSWER: Recall from Lesson 1 that good angels are called "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14), sent by God to aid His people. In contrast, Satan's evil angels are called "unclean spirits" or "demons." Read the account of the demoniac in Mark 5:2–16 for an example.

The witch conjured up "a spirit ascending out of the earth" (1 Samuel 28:13). Was it a ministering spirit or an unclean spirit? God expressly warned His people against all occult practices, such as employing mediums like Saul did (Leviticus 19:31; 20:27). God regarded the occult as so serious an offense that the punishment was death; and occultists—sorcerers, witches, psychics, mediums, and the like—are grouped as the wicked who will ultimately be destroyed (Revelation 21:8). We can conclude that the spirit this witch contacted was an unclean spirit, one of Satan's demons.





10. Why does Satan want us to believe that his demons are spirits of the dead?

Matthew 24:24. *For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to _____, if possible, even the elect.*

ANSWER: The Bible reveals that these signs, or miracles, performed by unclean spirits are meant to deceive (Revelation 13:13, 14; 19:20). This is in accordance with “the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish” (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10). Indeed, Satan’s first lie to humanity was: “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4).

In fact, these passages in Revelation foretell a massive wave of spiritual deception with which Satan cloaks the entire world just before the Second Coming. Jesus identified this deception as one of the signs portending the end of the world (Matthew 24:23–26). Satan’s demons will pose as “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:13) and Satan himself as “an angel of light” (v. 14).

We can see the devil’s strategy already coming to pass. How many believe that the dead are alive and can be contacted? How many have even had encounters with beings who look, sound, and seem just like their dead loved ones? Almost the entire world believes, in some form or another, in this occult art of “spiritism.” As the Bible states, “Satan ... deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9), and, “for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived” (18:23).

11. Is anyone able to overcome Satan's last-day deceptions?

Isaiah 8:19, 20. *And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people _____ their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this _____, it is because there is no _____ in them.*

ANSWER: God gave an explicit warning to not contact the so-called dead, for those who claim to contact the dead have "no light in them"; that is, they have no truth (Psalm 43:3). They are lying to you. Instead, we are taught to seek after Jesus, "the light of life" (John 8:12), the Word made manifest (John 1:14), and the truth (14:6). We get to "know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10) by studying the Scriptures, "which testify of [Him]" (John 5:39).

Sadly, the Bible reveals that some Christians will be deceived, "that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). But Revelation also tells of a group of people who will not fall for the devil's deceptions; they are those who worship God (13:8, 15; 14:7). As long as we know who Christ is and follow Him wherever He leads (v. 4), we have nothing to fear. We will be following the truth and will not be deceived.

12. Would you like to accept Jesus' offer of eternal life now and the promise of a glorified new body at His return?

Answer: _____





Lesson 9 Supplemental Material

The Thief on the Cross

In Luke 23:43, Jesus said to the repentant thief being crucified next to Him, “I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Many Christians believe this statement to be proof that people go immediately to heaven or hell after death. And while it may seem like an obvious interpretation, consider this simple question: *Did* Jesus go to Paradise, or heaven, that day?

According to Scripture, Jesus died on a Friday (Mark 15:42–46), what we call Good Friday. He lay resting in the grave all through the Sabbath, from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown (Luke 23:55, 56); the guards sealing and watching His tomb ensured that His body remained there (Matthew 27:62–66). Then, on the next day, known as Easter Sunday, Christ was resurrected (28:1–7).

Mark 16:9 further states, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” At that meeting, Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father” (John 20:17). Where is God the Father? He is in heaven (Psalm 33:13, 14)! The Bible just told us that Jesus did not ascend to heaven on the day of His death; in fact, He didn’t even ascend immediately after coming back to life. Thus, it was impossible for the thief to have been with Christ in Paradise on the day they both died.

So what did Jesus mean?

Did you know that the original manuscripts of the Bible had no punctuation? The punctuation marks were introduced by translators, who simply inserted them based on their preconceived notions of death. What if Jesus' statement were instead read with this punctuation: "I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise"? That is, Christ was assuring the thief, "I am telling you today—right now—that you have salvation in Me."

On that day, the day of His death, Christ paved the road to eternal life in the heavenly kingdom. When that thief is resurrected, he, along with all others who have accepted Christ, will ascend to be in Paradise with Jesus.



Try These Other Bible Study Resources from Amazing Facts!

**BEST
SELLER!**



Amazing Facts Study Guides

Excellent for personal or group study, these easy-to-understand, uplifting Bible lessons will bring faith, hope, and clarity to you and those with whom you share them. *27 lessons.*

SG-CSET Complete Boxed Set | Lessons 1–27

SG-ISET Introductory Set in Envelope | Lessons 1–14

SG-ASET Advanced Set in Envelope | Lessons 15–27

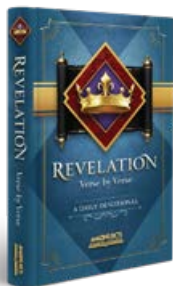
(Also available in Spanish.)



Panorama of Prophecy Bible Lesson Set

Many hearts today are troubled, but the Bible has answers that bring lasting hope. These lessons provide a clear view of end-time prophecy and major Bible truths to prepare you to meet Jesus. *24 lessons.*

SG-POPS

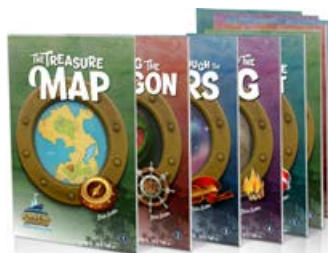


Revelation Verse by Verse: A Daily Devotional

This year-long devotional will deepen your understanding of Jesus' final revelation to the world and prepare your heart for what's about to take place on the earth. Each daily entry

and a helpful symbols chart reveal heaven's faithful messages and help you apply them victoriously to your life today!

Hardcover | BK-RVVH



Amazing Adventure Bible Guide Set

Fun, colorful Bible lessons for kids ages 8 to 12! *10 lessons.*

SG-BGSET

(Also available in Spanish.)

AMAZING FACTS
INTERNATIONAL



ORDER TODAY!
afbookstore.com
800-538-7275

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 14:6–12

