

# What Are “Near Death” Experiences?

“Would you comment on the near death experiences that people claim they have? Is it a way that God gives us hope about what can take place when we die so we have the memory of the beauty of those visions when we or our loved ones are resurrected? I understand about the spirit God gives us and your articles are very explanatory, but I still wonder if it is possible God gives us those beautiful visions upon death before we sleep until the resurrection.”

*William F. Dankenbring*

In Ecclesiastes 12:7 – notice, we read: “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was.” But notice – “And the spirit will return to God who gave it.” Every man, every woman, every baby, every child has a spirit given to it, or them, by God and when they die that spirit returns to God, to His care, His safe keeping, His control and He keeps it until the resurrection.

Then at the resurrection that spirit is joined with a new glorious immortal body.

Solomon goes on, “For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals for all is vanity. All go to one place: (that’s *sheol*, the grave, where the body turns to dust) all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Eccl.3:19).

But now notice verse 21, Solomon says, “who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?” So we just saw in chapter 12:7, that the spirit of men goes back to God who gave it. Where does the spirit of animals go? We don’t know.

## *After Death – Then What?*

However, in near-death experiences, which have been reported, some people say they saw a bright light, or a recently deceased relative spoke to them, or they had a glimpse of beauty, or possibly even heaven, as in a vision, and I see no reason to rule out such possibilities. God’s Word says “there is a spirit in man” (Job 32:8), and speaks of “souls under the altar” of God in heaven having “awareness” and sensory perception (Rev.6:9-11). There is a lot we don’t know about what happens, or can happen in certain

cases, after a person dies, or those brief moments between life and death, when the soul or spirit may hover between one existence and the next, in a transitory state.

### *Saul and Samuel*

The prophet Samuel spoke to king Saul from the grave, showing there can, in certain instances, be communication between the living and the deceased. These would be very unusual experiences, but things like that can happen – if and when God permits to occur for His own purposes, as a witness to mankind. We read in I Samuel 28 that a woman “saw a spirit ascending out of the earth” which looked in form like an old man in a mantle (v.13-14).

The account goes on to show it was the spirit of the prophet Samuel. In verse 15 Samuel says to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul told him he is afraid of the Philistine army gathering to make war with him and asked him what would happen.

In verse 18, we read, “Then SAMUEL said, ‘So why do you ask me, seeing the LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy? And the LORD has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD nor exercise His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day’” (I Sam.28:16-18). For a more in depth discussion of this strange event, read our article, “Saul and the Witch at Endor.”

There is no reason to think that near-death experiences cannot occur, sometimes as a strong encouragement, or other times as a severe warning, depending on the will and purpose of God in each case. They can give people a sense of hope and increase one’s feeling of peace, faith and contentment. On the other hand, some can be warning.

### *“Test Everything”*

Whether or not an experience of this nature is from God or some other source is also something to consider. As John warns us, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God” (I John 4:1). Paul says, “Prove [test] all things [everything]” (I Thess.5:21).

We are commanded to “TEST” or “examine” the “spirits,” the unusual phenomena, put it to the test. How do we do that? By evaluating it carefully, cautiously, circumspectly, using the Word of God as a guide, as a ruler and standard or litmus test.

Isaiah tells us, “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isa.8:19).

The answer, obviously, is “No.” All such things as séances and attempts to communicate with the dead are EVIL, an abomination in God’s sight! His Torah, His Word, says, “*To the LAW [Torah] and to the TESTIMONY* [rest of the Scriptures, and the New Testament]! If they do not speak *according to this word*, it is because there is no light in them” (v.20).

Any vision or “dream” must be analyzed and evaluated on the basis of whether it is in line with the Word of God. If it contradicts the Scriptures in any way then it is a FALSE VISION!

Jeremiah declares, “I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, *I have dreamed, I have dreamed*. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? **yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart**” (Jer.23:25-26).

“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and **he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully**. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. 29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? 30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour” (Jeremiah 23:28-30).

God warns us, in Jeremiah 23:32-34, “Behold, I am against them that prophesy *false dreams*, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: **therefore they shall not profit this people at all**, saith the LORD. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.”

Says Jeremiah “And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for **every** man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God” (Jer.23:36).

The Law of God, the Torah, states: “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31).

“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people” (Lev.20:6). “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death . . .” (verse 27).

Messing with the occult, and supernatural, is evil and condemned by God. Witches, mediums, wizards, necromancers, psychics, are all condemned by the Word of

God and we should have nothing whatsoever to do with them, or their crystal ball gazing, divination, or witchcraft, spells and potions.

Demons do exist. They attempt to deceive people with emotional-laden “experiences” and deceptions. Therefore we must always be cause, and confirm every experience or claimed experience with the Word of God. If it lines up with God’s Word, His Law, then there is no reason to doubt it. But if in any way it contradicts the Word of God, then it is a “lying spirit,” and not to be trusted or believed, no matter how subtle or convincing it may appear on the surface.

Those who dabble in such things may find themselves assaulted, and under attack by demon spirits. We should avoid anything to do with them – including Ouija boards, astrology, and all occult phenomena.

The apostle Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. RESIST him, steadfast in the faith” (I Pet.5:8-9).

James wrote, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Say to the evil spirit, as the apostle Jude declares, “The Lord REBUKE you!” (Jude 9).

If faced with such an attack, or mental assault, immediately call on God and Christ to deliver you and save you, and drive the evil spirits far away from you, into the wilderness, and to stay away from you. And fill your mind with the things of God. As Paul declares, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue [power] and if there is anything praiseworthy [good]—meditate on these things” (Phil.4:8).

### *Paul’s Experiences*

Paul himself had visions of heaven. He declared, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven” (II Cor.12:2).

Paul also says, “And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (II Cor.12:3).

Dreams, visions, and similar activities are prophesied to occur at an increased pace during the “Last Days.” God says to the prophet Joel, “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29).