

# Are the Souls of the Redeemed Conscious?

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Life after Death / Sleep; Soul / Luke 16:16–31

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## I. THE IDEA OF "SOUL SLEEPING"

### A. THE THEORY...

1. The souls of the departed continue to exist, but are in an unconscious state until the resurrection
2. This is not to be confused with the doctrine held by JW's, who believe there is no consciousness until the resurrection because until then there is no existence at all

### B. THE ARGUMENTS...

1. The Scriptures often represent death as a "sleep"
  - a. **Mt 27:52** - ...bodies of the saints who had "fallen asleep"...
  - b. **Jn 11:11-14** - Jesus says of dead Lazarus, "our friend sleeps"

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c. **Ac 7:60** - As Stephen is stoned to death, it is said "he fell asleep"

d. **1 Co 15:6,18** - Those who were dead are spoken of as "fallen asleep"

e. **1 Th 4:13-15** - Brethren who were dead "sleep in Jesus"

2. Other passages come very near to saying that the dead have no consciousness

a. **Psa 30:9** - The psalmist asks, "When I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you?"

b. **Psa 115:17** - The psalmist declares, "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence."

c. **Ecc 9:5,10** - Solomon, in his search for meaning, observes:

1) "...the dead know nothing..."

2) "there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

d. **Isa 38:18-19** - King Hezekiah says concerning God that "Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You, those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth."

## II. EXAMINING THE IDEA OF "SOUL SLEEPING"

### A. ARGUMENT #1: DEATH IS CALLED "SLEEP"...

1. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that the soul of the departed one fell asleep

2. The term "sleep" can be a figurative reference, and a very appropriate one:

a. For sleep implies rest...

#### **Revelation 14:13** ESV

<sup>13</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

b. For sleep implies a ceasing of participation...

c. For sleep is generally a prelude to an awakening...

3. Perhaps it can also be said that the term "sleep" became a euphemism for death because of the sleep-like appearance of the body

### B. ARGUMENT #2: PASSAGES WHICH SUGGEST THE DEAD HAVE NO CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER DEATH...

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1. Notice first that these passages are in the Old Testament, when revelation of God's truth was not yet complete
2. In some cases, the statements are made solely from an earthly perspective

## C. FINALLY, THE DOCTRINE OF "SOUL SLEEPING" IS OUT OF HARMONY WITH PASSAGES THAT CLEARLY TEACH CONSCIOUSNESS OF SOULS AFTER DEATH...

1. **Lk 16:22-26** - Abraham, the rich man, and Lazarus

### **Luke 16:22-26** ESV

<sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup> And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

2. **Lk 23:43** - How can Paradise be a state of unconsciousness?

### **Luke 23:43** ESV

<sup>43</sup> And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

3. **Re 6:9-11** - Can souls cry out if they are not conscious?

### **Revelation 6:9-11** ESV

<sup>9</sup> When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. <sup>10</sup> They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup> Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

4. **Re 7:9-17** - Can souls praise God and serve Him if they are not conscious?

5. **Re 20:4-6** - Can souls reign with Christ if they are not aware of what is going on?

### **Revelation 20:4-6** ESV

<sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or

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their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

## Luke 16:16–31

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F O R C E S O M E O N E W  
F S M R I C H E R E E T A  
N S C D G J L C J S W H L  
Y T K I N G D O M O S E S  
S K L P B O F M M R M N O  
I A B R A H A M H E A R W  
D N G O O D T I D S R J A  
E G F P M T H T I B R O P  
P U T H E R E S V Z I H A  
O I S E V E R Y O N E N S  
O S D T L A Z A R U S H S  
R H I S P R E A C H E D E  
I D E A D U L T E R Y N N  
J Y D T H I N G S A I D D

ABRAHAM	ADULTERY	ALSO
ANGUISH	COMMITTS	DEAD
DIED	DIVORCES	EVERYONE
FATHER	FORCES	GOOD
HEAR	HERE	JOHN
KINGDOM	LAZARUS	MARRIES
MOSES	NEWS	PASS
POOR	PREACHED	PROPHETS
RICH	SAID	SEND
SIDE	SOMEONE	SORES
THEN	THERE	THINGS