



Is a Near-Death Experience a Glimpse of Heaven?

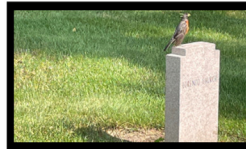
2 Corinthians 12:3-4: (NASB) ³And I know how such a man whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows ⁴was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.



Near-death experiences (NDEs) are common. They have been reported from cultures and religions worldwide for hundreds of years. In this near-death scenario, there is usually a dark tunnel at the end of which is a warm and calming light. Often there are deceased relatives waiting in that light to receive the person going through this near-death experience. Sometimes the person feels and sees themselves leave their body. At Christian Questions, we have always held that the Bible teaches that death is the absence of life. Could these NDEs be shedding a different light and proof on this subject?

Are these experiences showing us a gateway to the supernatural, or could they in any way be physiological? One way or another, near-death experiences do prove something. The question is, what?

As we embark on this fascinating subject, we recommend also listening to Episode 1201.



Episode 1201 Can the Dead Communicate With Us?

Examining After Death Communications in the light of Scripture

Listening to these two episodes together helps give a well-rounded view of the experiences people have where they feel like they are communicating with the dead or moving into a supernatural realm.

Our first task is to clearly define NDEs as factually as possible.

Oxford Dictionary:

near-death experience: noun

an unusual experience taking place on the brink of death and recounted by a person after recovery, typically an out-of-body experience or a vision of a tunnel of light.



Characteristics of NDEs:

There is predictable content. In over 30 years of research, the same characteristics show up across all cultures, gender, race, religion, intelligence, age and mental health:

- Often the experience is too great or extreme to describe in words
- Overwhelming feelings of peace

There is a grand emotional sense to the experience.

- Seeing a tunnel, moving through levels



- A sensation of being out of the body

Not only is there a great emotional aspect, but there is a unique physicality.

- Meeting nonphysical beings including a “being of light”
- Reviewing one’s life

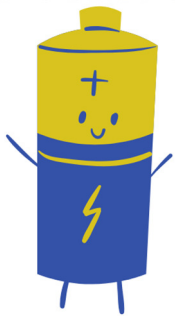
Other entities may be perceived.

- A border or point of no return
- Coming back to life with marked changes in attitudes or with knowledge not acquired through normal perception

There are both positive and negative effects from people having NDEs.

With advancements in medical resuscitation techniques, the frequency of NDEs has increased. It is estimated that nine million people in the United States alone have had an NDE. (This number varies according to the source.)

Positive



Positive Effects:

- Beneficial transformation follows
- Loss of fear of death
- Strengthened belief in life after death

The concept of death is “put into a box.”

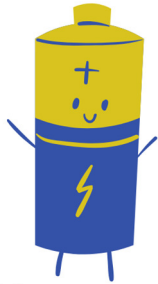
- Feeling specially favored by God
- A new sense of purpose or mission
- Heightened self-esteem

Life and its meaning are expanded out of the box.

- Increased compassion and love for others
- Lessened concern for material gain, recognition, or status; greater desire to serve others
- Increased ability to express feelings, greater appreciation of, and zest for life

NDEs give a clarity to the importance of our humanness, and not to the importance of “stuff.”

- Increased focus on the present
- Deeper religious faith or heightened spirituality
- Search for knowledge
- Greater appreciation for nature



Negative

However, not all NDEs have positive effects on the people. Quoting from an article from the National Center for Biotechnology Information. There are negative effects as well.

(Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6179792/>)

(Source: Greyson B. The near-death experience as a focus of clinical attention. *Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease*. 1997; 185:327-334.) Family and friends may find it difficult to understand the NDEr's new beliefs and behavior, as many of their new attitudes and beliefs are so different from those around them. Difficulty reconciling the new attitudes and beliefs with the expectations of family and friends can interfere with maintaining old roles and lifestyle, which no longer have the same meaning. NDErs may find it impossible to communicate to others the meaning and impact of the NDE on their lives.

They may experience a great positive feeling, but the people around them are saying: "Who are you, what's happened to you, how come you're not the same person?" This great positive experience for this person could be a negative in their life in terms of family and friends because they are now living in a different way.

(Source: Bush NE. Is ten years a life review? *Journal of Near-Death Studies*. 1991; 10:5-9) Researchers have noted that the value incongruities between NDErs and their families lead to a relatively high divorce rate among NDErs. The effects of an NDE "may include long-term depression, broken relationships, disrupted career, feelings of severe alienation, an inability to function in the world, long years of struggling with the keen sense of altered reality."



One other important point - there are also distressing near-death experiences that range from fear and terror to guilt and despair.

(Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6173534/> - Distressing Near-Death Experiences: The Basics") No evidence supports the conventional assumption that "good" people get pleasant NDEs and "bad" people have distressing ones. Saints have reported extremely disturbing NDEs while felons and suicide attempters have encountered bliss.

While a high percentage of NDEs reported come from patients who suffer cardiac arrest, to say "near death" is somewhat a misnomer, because the sensation can happen when a person is not near death at all, such as syncope (fainting).

The medical definition of death is complicated. In simple terms, death is the permanent, irreversible cessation of all vital functions. There is definitely a dying PROCESS before it becomes irreversible. Modern medicine keeps advancing the "point of no return."



Can NDEs be used to prove that the human soul is immortal?
Does an NDE show that when we die, we instantaneously change the form of our being?

Webster's Online Dictionary:

immortal: adjective

1. exempt from death
2. exempt from oblivion



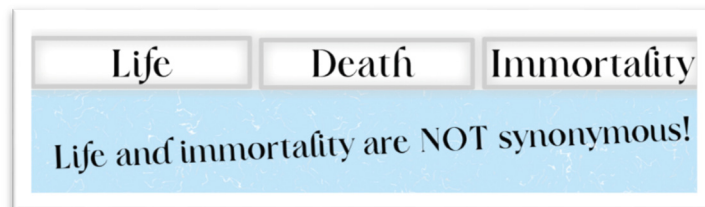
The Bible denies the immortality of the soul:

Immortality: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #861 *aphtharsia*; incorruptibility; unending existence; (figuratively) genuineness
King James Version translates this word as immortality, incorruption, sincerity

Immortality: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #110 *athanasia*;
from a compound of #1 (as a negative particle) and #2288; deathlessness

Immortality means “deathlessness.” We will see in Scripture that immortality is NOT automatically part of humanity. Since this may be a new thought to many, let’s look at what the Scriptures teach:

2 Timothy 1:10: (KJV) *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and **immortality** <861> to light through the gospel:*



There is a stark contrast between life, death and immortality here. There are different aspects of salvation which we will touch on later:

Romans 2:7: (KJV) *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and **immortality** <861>, eternal life:*

If we are seeking for *glory, honor and immortality*, it means we do not have them to start with. This is an important concept being taught by the Apostle Paul. We would not have to seek for something we already possess.

Let’s look at another teaching from Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 15:53-54: (KJV) ⁵³*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on **immortality** <110>.* ⁵⁴*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.*

This text shows that death is the absence of life and immortality is a gift from God. *This corruptible* - this thing that can go bad - must *put on incorruption*, something that cannot go bad. The idea of having immortality within us as human beings is not written in the New Testament. Immortality is not inherent.



1 Timothy 6:16: (KJV) *Who only hath **immortality** <110>, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*



Immortality a GIFT, and the glorified Jesus was the only recipient of this gift at that time as he dwelt in the light of God. Immortality is NOT part of human nature.

The concepts of death and dying are difficult enough for adults, so to help explain it to children, please watch our CQ Kids videos.

Check out our CQ Kids videos:



**ARE THE DEAD REALLY DEAD?
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?
WHAT IS THE SOUL?
WHY DO WE DIE?**

christianquestions.com/youtube

For more detail on this topic, we refer you to our two-part series: "Where Does Your Soul Go When You Die?"



**Episodes 857 and 861:
Where Does Your Soul Go
When You Die? (Parts I and II)**

Biblically defining the soul. Explaining difficult texts and "out of body" experiences



AND THE CONFUSION
THAT SURROUNDS THEM:

NDEs DO RAISE A LOT OF QUESTIONS
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE.

ON THE OTHER HAND,

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR IN ITS MESSAGE.

CAN NDEs AND THE BIBLE BE IN
FULL AGREEMENT?

Near-death experiences are not just fascinating, they are compelling as well. What exactly are they showing us?

**Are there cultural and religious differences when people have NDEs?
What would these differences reveal?**

As we dig more deeply into how near-death experiences work, we will see some fascinating variations of the whole process. While reviewing these variations, it is important for us to realize how the power of our human mind shapes our interpretations of experiences to feed our expectations. We will focus on how our preconceptions cause us to look at things the way we do.

There is a universally spiritual orientation of experiences following an NDE. There are both similarities and differences in the way people from different religions interpret these experiences.



Christians: Christians report encounters with religious beings such as Jesus, Mary or angels. Some Christians refute the near-death experience as being a demonic deception. They believe that the entire near-death experience is a trick of Satan to pull believers from the teachings of Christianity and lead them into sin. Other Christians interpret the near-death experience as a glimpse of an after-death state that may exist prior to the afterlife judgment by God.



Some Christians think we should stay away from NDEs because they are a trick of Satan, while others embrace them. Many have a sense of the afterlife and are looking towards something in expectation.



Mormons: Interestingly, Mormons report a high number of NDEs per capita in their religion, possibly because they are more encouraged to share such experiences. They report life reviews and judge their own actions while awash in the “unconditional love of God.” They consistently report meeting deceased family members, this is uncommon with other religions:

- They report they are requested to do something in the world when they return.
- They report they receive religious and other types of instructions from the “other world” beings.

This is consistent with Mormon faith structure. We are seeing that NDEs generally fulfill the individual’s religious expectations.



Jews: Jewish people report being in the presence of a Being of Light and judging their own lives. They describe being met by family members, consistent with the belief of some Jews that they will be reunited after death with family members in heaven. In Judaism overall, there is not one common idea of an afterlife, which may be why descriptions are fewer. Many Jewish people do not believe there is anything after this lifetime.

As we go through this, we need to observe the way the religions interpret the feelings they get from an NDE.



Muslims: Muslims have reported seeing and meeting recognizable spirits, conforming to Islamic tradition that the souls of the faithful, in paradise, welcome the “incoming souls.” They identify the Being of Light as Allah. Some Muslims interpret the NDE as a possible glimpse into life after death due to the similarity of the experience with the religious visions of Muhammad and their expectations of life after death.

Again, there is an expectation of life after death. It seems that often faith filters the interpretation of the NDE.



Hindus: This depends on where you are from, termed by some as “cultural flexibility.” Japanese Hindus have reported seeing symbolic images such as long, dark rivers and beautiful flowers. East Indians often see heaven as a giant bureaucracy, and frequently report being sent back because of clerical errors.



Here is an example of the accounts we have read: *Jonathan would arrive at the light, and they say, “Jonathan, the Christian Questions Host? Oh no, we wanted Jonathan the Plumber. There’s been a mistake. You have to go back!”*

Hindu experiencers have seen Krishna. Buddhists have reported seeing Buddha.

(Source: <https://www.sanskritimagazine.com/indian-religions/hinduism/life-death-near-death-experiences-hindus/>) Consistent with western accounts, some Hindu near-death accounts included a life review. However, whereas in western accounts the life review often consists of seeing a panoramic view of a person’s entire life, Hindu accounts consist of having someone read the record of the dying person’s life (called the “akashic record”). In Hindu circles, it is a traditional belief that the reading of a person’s akashic record occurs immediately after death and this concept is widely believed by Hindus all over India. However, the panoramic life review, which is commonly mentioned in western accounts, does not appear in accounts from India.

That is a stark difference between the Hindu and western accounts of seeing their lives “flash before their eyes.” The Hindu often sees someone reading the account of their lives. When we see this difference, is it coincidence that everyone sees an NDE through the eyes of what their expectations are, or is this something that will help us understand what NDEs actually are? What about those who are not religious?



Atheists: If your experience is at least partially based on the details of your belief system, what if you have no belief system about an afterlife? Atheists and agnostics, who do not believe in life after death, generally end up interpreting the experience as similar with their specific culture. Those in the west, for example, seem to report the traditional characteristics but with different interpretations. For example, while Christians might interpret the bright light they see as Christ, atheists may identify it as a “guide.” Curiously, it often changes their perspective, and most atheists and agnostics move towards a more spiritually-guided life as a result of their NDE. So those cultural religious beliefs are obviously somewhere in their psyche.



Our human mind interprets what we experience and observe in ways that fit our core beliefs. That is how our minds, as humans, search and explain the information we receive using our already established core beliefs. Recognizing this factor helps understand how to view NDEs.

NDEs *seem* to perpetuate what some scriptures *seem* to say about being reunited with deceased loved ones after we die. In the Jewish perspective, we saw a lot of that reuniting with loved ones. Why would that be?

An often-used Old Testament phrase seems to indicate a reunion among the dead:

Genesis 25:17: (KJV) *And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost (spirit) and died; and was gathered unto his people.*

Genesis 35:29: (KJV) *And Isaac gave up the ghost (spirit), and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*



This brings to mind a “gathering.” This might indicate a getting together someplace with our loved ones. What are these scriptures telling us?

Answers to this phrase are centered on understanding what the Jewish faith taught about death:

Deuteronomy 31:16: (NASB) *The LORD said to Moses, Behold, **you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.***

God is telling Moses here that he is going to *lie down with your fathers*. What does this mean?

God is telling him **he is going to die**, and that while he is dead, the Israelites will rise up and be unfaithful to the true God. Here we understand that *lie down with your fathers* or *gathered unto his people* means **going into the grave with the ancestors that died before**.



Job 14:10-12: (NASB) *¹⁰But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? ¹¹As water evaporates from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dried up, ¹²So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.*



This verse sounds like we are never coming back from death! However, in the very next verse, Job asks that he be hid in the grave, this place of quiet and peace, until God’s wrath be past and He will remember Job. The Bible talks about *a new heavens and a new earth*, as well as all the evidence of Isaiah 65:17; 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1. **These verses confirm we will certainly be brought back to life again.** But first we must *lie down with our fathers in the grave*.

Job 7:21: (NASB) *Why then do You not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now **I will lie down in the dust; And You will seek me, but I will not be.***

Job is talking about that state were the body eventually decomposes. Death is lifelessness, and even though we may like the idea of being IMMEDIATELY reunited with our deceased loved ones after death, it is simply NOT taught in the Bible. **It will not happen until the future resurrection for the majority of mankind.** (The exception being, the faithful followers of Christ are promised a heavenly reward at Christ’s second presence.)



AND THE CONFUSION
THAT SURROUNDS THEM:

THE DETAILS OF NDEs VARY DRAMATICALLY, DEPENDING
ON ONE’S CULTURE AND RELIGION. THIS VARIED
PERSPECTIVE FITS WELL WITH THE BIBLE’S UNWAVERING
TEACHING ABOUT DEATH BEING LIFELESSNESS.

**TO PUT THESE TOGETHER WE CONCLUDE THAT
NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES ARE NOT AFTER DEATH
BUT NEAR DEATH AND HAPPEN IN THE MIND.**



We are making this conclusion based on biblical teachings, as well as the different interpretations of reported NDEs among the various groups. More on this as we continue.

It is easy to draw that “reuniting” conclusion we talked about earlier. The question now is whether it is provable that NDEs only happen in our mind.

**Can someone have near-death experiences when they are not near death?
What about “out-of-body experiences”?**

Up to this point, there may be many questions floating around as to the validity of NDEs being supernatural experiences that inherently contradict the Bible. As we shall soon see, science and medical understanding will give us an undeniable foundation on which to place biblical beliefs.

We are going to quote from an article from the University of Edinburgh, Department of Psychology in Scotland, called, *There is nothing paranormal about near-death experiences: how neuroscience can explain seeing bright lights, meeting the dead, or being convinced you are one of them*.

(Source: Mobbs, D & Watt, C 2011, 'There is nothing paranormal about near-death experiences: how neuroscience can explain seeing bright lights, meeting the dead, or being convinced you are one of them', Trends in Cognitive Sciences, vol. 15, no. 10, pp. 447-449. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2011.07.010>)

Introductory paragraph of the article:

“Approximately 3% of Americans declare to have had a near-death experience. These experiences classically involve the feeling that one’s soul has left the body, approaches a bright light and goes to another reality where love and bliss are all encompassing. Contrary to popular belief, research suggests that there is nothing paranormal about these experiences. Instead, near-death experiences are the manifestation of normal brain function gone awry during a traumatic and sometimes harmless event.”



Out-of-body experiences:

“Recently, Olaf Blanke (a Swiss and German physician, neurologist and neuroscientist) and colleagues demonstrated that out-of-body experiences can be artificially induced by stimulating the right temporoparietal junction. Upon stimulation, the patient would say things like, ‘I see myself lying in bed...’”

(Sub-source: Nelson K. Near-death experiences--Neuroscience perspectives on near-death experiences. *Mo Med*. 2015;112(2):92-98.) “Directly stimulating the temporoparietal cortex with a small electrical current evokes out-of-body experience. In the laboratory, the neurophysiologist can bring a patient in and out-of-body, back and forth with the flip of a switch.”

Stimulating a certain part of the brain elicits a predictable physiological response.



A tunnel of light:

“These experiences can also be artificially induced: pilots flying at G-force can sometimes experience a phenomenon known as hypotensive syncope, which usually causes tunnel-like peripheral to central visual loss to develop over 5-8 seconds. Indeed, such tunnel vision is associated with extreme fear and hypoxia (i.e., oxygen loss), two processes common to dying.”



The tunnel of light experience can be artificially induced.

Meeting deceased people:

“Prevalent in fiction and celluloid (movies) is the notion that, when we die, we are surrounded by the souls of the dead, angels or a religious figure in a peaceful, transcendental place. Many neuroscientific studies have shown that brain pathology can lead to similar visions. For example, patients with Alzheimer’s or progressive Parkinson’s disease can have vivid hallucinations of ghosts or even monsters.”



These are physiologically explainable with reproducible results.

Positive emotions:

“Many medicinal and recreational drugs, however, can mirror the positive emotions and visions reported in near-death experiences. At varying doses, the administration of ketamine can mimic these experiences including hallucinations, out-of-body experiences, positive emotions such as euphoria, dissociation and spiritual experiences.”

Excerpt from the article’s conclusion:

“Taken together, the scientific evidence suggests that all aspects of the near-death experience have a neurophysiological or psychological basis: the vivid pleasure frequently experienced in near-death experiences may be the result of fear-elicited opioid release, while the life review and REM components of the near-death experience could be attributed to the action of the locus coeruleus-noradrenaline system. Out-of-body experiences and feelings of disconnection with the physical body could arise because of a breakdown in multisensory processes, and the bright lights and tunneling could be the result of a peripheral to fovea breakdown of the visual system through oxygen deprivation.”

We understand these things from a scientific perspective. But skeptics of the science say that these may mimic parts of an NDE but are not quite the same. But again, because death is really a process, not an event, we do not know what the *combinations* of activity of the brain shutting down looks like.



"terminal lucidity"

Interestingly, there is a term called “terminal lucidity” experienced by dementia and some Alzheimer’s patients moments before they pass. They go from being unresponsive for years, and then they suddenly have unexpected mental clarity and memory, carrying on a completely normal and lucid conversation with their loved ones. We have no



idea how this happens and have not yet been able to simulate it, so there is much we do not yet know about this marvelous brain God created for us.



This happened to my father-in-law. He was non-responsive and we got word that he suddenly was talking. It went on for a short period of time and then he passed. We had the hope that he could recover, but it was not to be.

We believe NDEs are a natural experience - not a paranormal one - created by the brain.

Did the Apostle Paul have an out-of-body experience?

2 Corinthians 12:1-5: (NASB) ¹*Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.*

In relating this heavenly vision, Paul honestly expresses how real the vision was. Uncharacteristically, the confusion as to its reality was so great that it left him with an unanswered question.

³*And I know how such a man whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows ⁴was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. ⁵On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.*

Whatever happened was so real that Paul felt like he was in a different place. He knew that to be transported to another place was not a natural occurrence and wrestled with the reality vs. vision explanation.



Opinion from Rick: I do believe that Paul did have a vision and the portions of the brain that give NDEs their realism were stimulated by God to show him the reality of God's future kingdom in a way that was so dramatic, powerful and overwhelming that he would never forget it. God created the human mind and knows how to stimulate a vision that would stay with him for the rest of his life.

Romans 6:23: (NRSV) *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The wages of sin is lifelessness. The gift of God through resurrection at the appointed time is life.



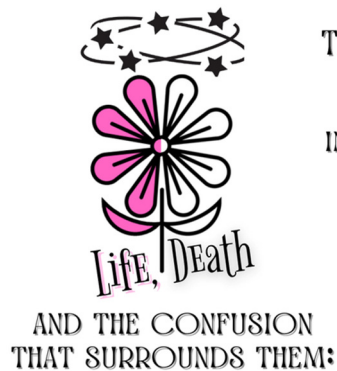
**Episode 838:
How Many Resurrections
Will There Be?**

Discussing the different biblical classes of resurrection



**Episodes 1174 and 1175
Did God Make Heaven and Hell
Humanity's Destiny? (Parts I and II)**

Uncovering who goes to heaven and what happens to planet Earth



THE SCIENCE BEHIND EXPLAINING NDEs IS COMPELLING, AS IT LEAVES A WIDE-OPEN DOOR FOR HUMAN INTERPRETATION. FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE, AN NDE IS A POSITIVE AND CALMING EXPERIENCE.

COULD GOD HAVE PROGRAMMED THE SHUTTING DOWN OF OUR MINDS AS WE APPROACH DEATH TO HELP US COPE?

Again, we believe this is happening physiologically and not paranormally.

It is amazing how modern science helps us to discover the depths of our own human minds. God's creation is magnificent!

Are there any out-of-body experiences that contradict the science and support NDEs as a paranormal experience?



"veridical evidence"

One final area we need to spend some time on is something called "veridical evidence." This has to do with things that are claimed to have happened when a near death patient sees and experiences things while outside their body. How can you explain a brain-dead person seeing things from outside their body?

From our research, while this veridical type is the most sensational type of NDE, it is alleged to happen very rarely compared to the millions of "typical" NDE experiences. Veridical NDEs are difficult to scientifically prove, and the internet is loaded with urban legends and anecdotes of someone who said something - who told someone else, and therefore it has to be true. There are a handful of cases that show up again and again as "proof." We will briefly introduce you to two of them.

The first is called **Maria's Shoe**. In 1977, a cardiac patient in a Seattle hospital, who was an out-of-town migrant worker named Maria, claimed to have an out-of-body experience, during which she saw a shoe on a ledge outside her window that supposedly was not visible from her hospital bed. Maria described it to her social worker, and the shoe was found as described.



One problem is we only have the description of the social worker with no independent account. Maria is untraceable and presumed dead. In recreating it, some say the shoe would have been visible from the street and she could have seen it consciously or subconsciously as she entered the hospital. Others say the location of the shoe was visible from the room and that there was no record of a "Maria" being in the hospital at that time. Memories faded on exactly where the shoe was found and in what room it occurred - all on a building that has since been remodeled. Skeptics put holes in it and proponents think it is conclusive, but there is not any way to prove what happened.



There are ongoing clinical studies where hospitals are experimenting with concealed targets in operating and recovery rooms to see if patients are able to detect items that are out of view. So far, no positive results have been published.

The second case that is frequently cited by both skeptics and proponents is that of **Pam Reynolds**. In 1991, a 35-year-old woman underwent a difficult procedure to remove a brain aneurysm, inducing hypothermic cardiac arrest. It involved lowering her body temperature to 60 degrees, stopping her heart and breathing, and draining the blood from her brain to cool it. Both the heartbeat and brain activity stopped. Once she had no brain activity, the aneurysm was removed and she survived. She reported a classic NDE with a tunnel, bright light and seeing deceased relatives, but she also had a very vivid out-of-body experience that was originally alleged to happen during the time she was clinically dead with no brain activity.

She reported being able to view the operating room from above and described the bone saw being used and was able to recall specific conversations of the surgical team. However, only the details of what she *heard* were accurate. Visual details that could not be guessed or plausibly learned after the fact were not accurate. There is a lot of evidence the NDE did NOT occur during the time when the brain was silent, and that in fact, it can be timed to almost two hours prior to flatlining. It is now thought that her ability to



perceive events during the surgery was the result of “anesthesia awareness.” This is a rare complication of general anesthesia where patients regain varying levels of consciousness during the surgery, including explicit recall that can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder from the events experienced.



"anesthesia awareness"

There are a lot more details to this case, but anesthesiologist and NDE skeptic Dr. G.M. Woerlee explains it as, “Her experience was a product of anesthetic drugs, abnormal interpretations of bodily sensations, together with a perception of personal imminent death all causing her body to function in such a way that she underwent a series of truly wondrous experiences.”



We are in NO WAY saying the people who have NDEs are not sincere. They have had a life-changing event occur and know for sure this has happened to them. We are not discrediting anything they are saying.

However, the internet is rife with a repetition of stories that become urban legends. Veridical cases especially need to be individually and carefully examined. There have been some very well-known hoaxes.

We cannot say to an NDEr, “Well, this is only physiological. It is no big deal.” If someone is traumatized by the experience, they are traumatized by it! It does not matter what caused the trauma; it needs to be dealt with. We do not



minimize how they feel. This is a big deal and many people have to learn how to cope with the experience and go on with normal life.

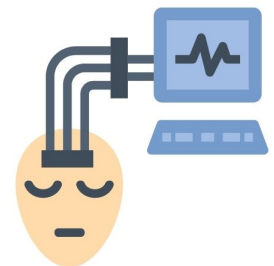
Who is Susan Blackmore? Dr. Susan Blackmore is a psychologist and visiting professor at the School of Psychology, University of Plymouth, England. She herself has had NDEs. She used to be a parapsychologist, dedicating herself to paranormal studies. After 30 years of not being able to prove or see any evidence for psychic phenomena, she is now considered a skeptic.

Let's go to the following audio clips where Dr. Blackmore discusses her thoughts. She references Mr. Pim van Lommel, a cardiologist and researcher on the relationship between consciousness and the brain.



Part 1 - Susan Blackmore, *Scientific Evidence and the Near-Death Experience*

- (Interviewer) From my understanding, brain function ceases after 15 seconds in a cardiac arrest. People flatline, and when they're brought back and they have a near-death experience, they report an enhanced consciousness during a period when they were supposed to be unconscious. How do you explain this?*
- (Dr. Blackmore) Well, I couldn't if it's true, and I don't think it is. If you read, for example, Pim van Lommel does state again and again the same words in many chapters and papers that these experiences happened when the brain had no activity. We do not know that. This is an open question. What we do know is that people have described things - very vivid experiences - after they are able to describe it, sometime after the crisis is over. But there is no case in which we know exactly when that was happening. If the brain activity did stop - and very, very few cases - people typically coming close to death are not doing it in the scanner or with EEG electrodes all over them. We don't know exactly when their brain stops. We usually know when their heart stops and when the blood stops pumping around, so that's something. Let's stick with that at least. It could be that these experiences are happening as they come into that state. As the heart stops in a cardiac arrest, the blood will still be moving a little bit, there'll still be oxygen in it - that could be the opportunity, or when it starts up again, it could be starting up again then. Unless we know exactly when it was happening, then it could be one of those two. That's really an open question. And it's disingenuous of people to say that we know that - "It happened when their brain wasn't..." - we don't know that.*



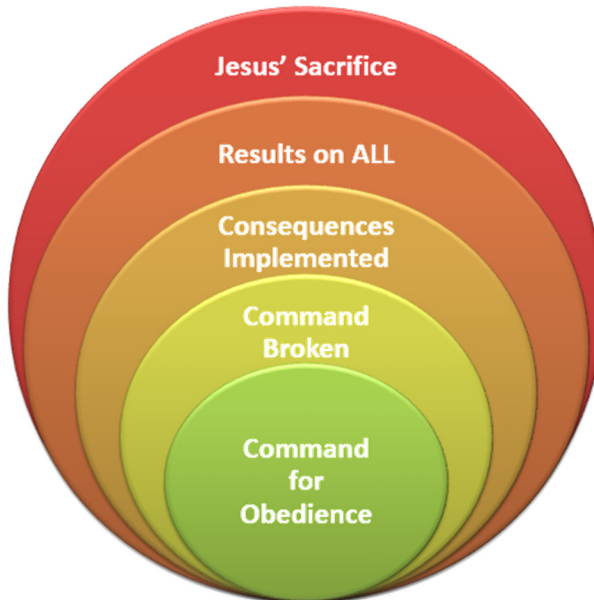
Part 2 - Susan Blackmore, *Scientific Evidence and the Near-Death Experience*

- The classic idea, which would seem quite logical, is that if the heart stops, then the blood ceases going around in the brain, and therefore all experiences should stop. Up to a point that is so, and that's known from lots of medical studies. But there have been reports for a long time of some sort of burst of activity that comes rather later. So, an experiment was done, an extraordinary helpful and difficult experiment, in 2009, with seven people who were on life support systems with no hope of any recovery, and it was decided to turn off the life support. They had EEG electrodes on to ensure that they were not suffering or in pain or whatever; done very carefully. And*



what they saw in these experiments was that yes, the brain activity went down and then kind of flatlined, but then before it completely stopped altogether, there was a burst of activity lasting anywhere from between about half a minute and three minutes, which is quite a long time. Now, that burst of activity would be what I'm supposing - and I'm coming over all these years of research I've been doing - to the view that that burst may be quite enough to produce these extraordinary experiences and would be due to hyperactivity, disorganized activity, in all these different parts of the brain, lasting rather briefly. If you are then resuscitated, that's what you are going to remember. Subsequent to that, there have been experiments with rats, where they've caused a cardiac arrest in the rats and measured them, and again, you get this slow tailing off and then this burst of activity before it goes off again. I don't know that this is the answer, but this is the kind of place to look. Timing is critical. So, don't believe when people say, "Oh, this person saw this when their brain had no activity." Unless they have that person in the scanner or an EEG on them, we don't know that.

With all this being said, we do believe that life after death does exist. However, our belief is based on the following basic scriptural evidence:



Adam sinned and we all inherit that sin, which brought death:

Romans 5:12: (NASB) *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*

Command for Obedience

Genesis 2:15-17 - God created only one man (and then created a woman from him). Adam was told in the very beginning that God had rules, which were for his protection. God gave rules because He loved Adam (and his progeny) and knew mankind needed the guidance of their Father as they learned how to live in this world. The first command was OBEDIENCE.



Death is the absence of life, depicted in the description God gave to Adam:

Genesis 3:19: (NASB) *By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

This is a simple, straightforward statement from God to Adam, before there are any religions, traditions or other conclusions. Death is the absence of life.

Command Broken

Genesis 3:6 - Adam sinned by disobeying the command of obedience to God.

Consequences Implemented

Genesis 3:23; 5:5 - God's justice was put into place when the consequences of disobedience were implemented. The history of mankind took a dramatic turn at this point because of the sinful choice of Adam and Eve.

Jesus came and as A PERFECT MAN offered himself for the sake of Adam and all humankind:

Romans 5:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous.*

Because ALL of mankind is in Adam's posterity, ALL men die.

Results on ALL

Romans 5:12 - Rather than create a whole world of people where each would have to be tested and fail, God's economy and efficiency combined the punishment under one man (and his progeny) so that He could also efficiently provide the cure.

Sin brings death - the gift of God brings life - how? Through resurrection:

John 5:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, ²⁹and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.*

There will be a resuscitation from lifelessness.

The Future Kingdom

Romans 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 15:20,22 - The efficiency of God's plan in providing ONE man to redeem ALL of Adam's race is stunning! If God had created a multitude of people who were tested and failed (a likely occurrence), then each would require a separate redeemer. How complicated and wasteful. Plus, where would He have found enough perfect saviors willing to die for someone?

Resurrection brings accountability and that accountability will bring life:

Jeremiah 31:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸*As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD. ²⁹In those days they will not say again, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.*



We are now being held liable for Adam's sin. In the future, everyone will be liable for themselves and can make their own personal choices.

The Future Kingdom

John 5:28,29 - The resurrection that will bring ALL mankind back to life on earth will then require a learning, rehabilitation and testing period. It will be necessary for man to learn how to live righteously, to not harm others or the earth. Those that choose to follow righteousness after this will have everlasting life (but not immortality).

Life in Christ will eventually bring peace and harmony with God:

James 1:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.* ¹⁷*Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

Here are the good and perfect things God will do:

Revelation 21:4: (KJV) *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

This describes the goodness of the future life of mankind as a result of the sacrifice of Jesus.

The Future Kingdom

2 Corinthians 5:15-21 - There is a "called out" class of faithful followers of Jesus who are promised a heavenly reward. These true Christians will have the blessing of a "ministry of reconciliation," helping mankind to be restored back to God after their resurrection. What a privilege to be part of this class!



So, is a near-death experience all about physiology? Is it a satanic influence deceiving people, as Satan is called *the father of lies* in John 8:44? Or, are we actually peering into the afterlife?

We believe it is about a physiological process of the human mind and body. While Satan could use it as a tool of deception, it is not inherently a tool of Satan.



AND THE CONFUSION
THAT SURROUNDS THEM:

ONCE AGAIN WE SEE THE WHOLE MATTER OF LIFE,
DEATH AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AFTERLIFE PUT
INTO AN UNDERSTANDABLE SEQUENCE BY
SEARCHING SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE.

THE ANSWERS WE NOW HAVE NOT ONLY
SATISFY OUR CURIOSITY, THEY GIVE
GREAT HOPE FOR THE FUTURE!



Near-death experiences are real in that they happen, are remembered and change peoples' lives. If we know of someone, or perhaps even ourselves, having a hard time coping with it, we must seek help to deal with it appropriately. While we believe it to be physiological, this does not minimize whatever trauma or unrest it created. We realize the gift of God can be eternal life through Jesus, but that is different from an NDE. God's plan creates the opportunity for life for everyone.

*So, is a near-death experience a glimpse of heaven?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on December 6, 2021
Ep. 1207: Are There Secrets to Studying the Bible?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Study Questions follow

Christian Questions Weekly
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CQ Rewind Show Notes and
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Text
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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1206: Is a Near-Death Experience a Glimpse of Heaven?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1206-near-death-experience/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What is a near-death experience (NDE)? What are some characteristics of them? What positive and negative effects can they have on someone's life?
2. What is the biblical definition of "immortality?" What does the Bible teach about the differences between life, death and immortality? Do human beings inherently have immortality within? (See Romans 2:7, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, 2 Timothy 1:10, 6:16)
3. How do people from different religions interpret NDEs? How about atheists? What do these different interpretations teach us about NDEs and about how our minds work?
4. Does the Old Testament speak about reunion with loved ones after death? What are these scriptures saying? What is death? (See Genesis 25:17, 35:29, Deuteronomy 31:16, Job 7:21, 14:10-12)
5. What are the scientific explanations behind the phenomena experienced during an NDE? What role may God play in this? (See Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 12:1-5) Is there veridical evidence that NDEs are a paranormal experience? Can they be reasonably be explained in a non-paranormal way? If so, how?
6. What are the steps that led to all of mankind being condemned to death? Was it "fair" that God condemned the whole human race for something Adam did? (See Genesis 2:15-17, 3:16, 19, 23, 5:5, Romans 5:12, 18-19)
7. What was God's plan to provide us with an opportunity for life after death? How was God "just" in His plan? How was He merciful? Was His mercy unjust? (See Jeremiah 31:28-30, John 5:28-29, Romans 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 2 Corinthians 5:15-21, James 1:16-17, Revelation 21:4)
8. Have you had an NDE? If so, what was it like? How did it affect you? Do you feel that NDEs are tools of Satan, physiological manifestations or glimpses of heaven? Why?