

Do Not Be Deceived: The Dead Know Nothing Until They Are Resurrected

By: Merryll DeMott

Thank you, Tracy for inviting me to this conference. What a wonderful theme, “Loyal and Wise”.

Of course, we need to ask the question; To whom does our loyalty belong, and are we truly wise in choosing where we place it? Proverbs 3:5-6 says: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.”

The title of this presentation is:

Do Not Be Deceived: The Dead Know Nothing Until They Are Resurrected

It has been increasingly apparent to me that many people in the biblical One God faith, those who claim to be following the human Jesus Messiah – are embracing doctrines that are not founded in Scripture. And this is especially true when it comes to the topic of death and the afterlife. Though sincere in their faith, or their belief, they have turned from bible truths to other ideologies. This is a very dangerous position as they are at risk of falling into deception and falsehood. Some of these beliefs suggest that the dead are conscious in some way, or active.

There are also other professing Christians, who believe in an immediate reward or punishment after death, even able to communicate with the living. And one of the most widespread and dangerous ideas is the belief that man possesses an inherently immortal soul, or that “something” or some part of them survives after death as in dualism. Add to that, the belief of reincarnation - that a soul returns in a new body after death. And Near-death experiences are also portrayed as glimpses into the afterlife.

Many books have been written about death and what happens when we die; with a multitude of perspectives, from religious and cultural backgrounds, scientific and personal beliefs, to philosophies and traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next. Throughout history, people have sought to understand death, seeking insight into what lies beyond the grave. Movies, as well as the Internet have just as many thoughts and opinions each presenting its own perspective, often shaped by imagination and tradition rather than biblical truth.

At an early age, growing up in a Roman Catholic home, I was taught to believe in the existence of an invisible immortal soul within each of us. And when you die, your soul goes out of your body and it either goes to heaven, or hell, depending on whether you lived a good life or a bad one. Thinking about hell was terrifying, as it was a place of torment lasting forever. I was also taught that if a person dies before they are baptized, their soul will go to a place called Purgatory. Kind of an in-between heaven and hell. I was also taught to pray to the virgin Mary, and the many saints in heaven, who would “carry” or intercede for me bringing my prayer requests to God. I even memorized a prayer that I found printed on a small card at my grandmother’s house; it had a picture of Jesus and a heart on the reverse side. I memorized and repeated that prayer well into my young adulthood. Prayer cards, as these are known, can be tied to the Catholic tradition of paying indulgences for dead loved ones or praying for a deceased loved one’s soul. And every Sunday, we repeated the Nicene creed. Since we didn’t read the Bible, I trusted what I heard in church. And I didn’t question these things, until I started reading the Bible for myself.

The subject of death is not an easy topic. It is very personal for each of us, as many have experienced firsthand what it's like to lose someone we dearly love. Sadness, tears, and heartache can be overwhelming. It is often at this time that one finds comfort in their beliefs.

Some may say, "It doesn't really matter what you believe about death, or where you go; death is a part of life." Others may joke or mask their fear, discomfort or uncertainty saying, "We all gotta go sometime," or "It was just their time", or "God needed another angel."

Putting our trust in God is most important. And it is the Bible that gives us God's direction, understanding, wisdom and His divine plan for our salvation. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 says: "All scripture is inspired of God, and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work."

It is my intention and hope that you will put your confidence and trust in what the Bible says, as it is our only reliable source for understanding life, death, and the hope of resurrection through Jesus Christ, so that you will not be deceived. I encourage you to ask yourself, "Does it really matter what I believe about what happens when we die?"

So, do people really have an immortal soul?

Let's start at the very beginning when God created the first man, Adam.

Genesis 2:7, "Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (BSB)

Here is the first human made from the dust from the ground coming to life when God breathed the breath of life into the man, Adam. In fact, the name Adam in Hebrew (Adamah) means ground or earth. So, God breathed into Adam's nostrils, and he came alive.

Some bible translations may say "and the man became a living person" or "and the man became a living soul". – The Hebrew word for soul is "nephesh", which means a living being; God breathed life into the man of dust and he came to be a living, breathing, created being.

Nephesh or soul is also used when God created every living creature upon the earth. Genesis 1:20,21 says: "And God said, "Let the waters teem with living creatures (nephesh), and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the sky. So, God created the great sea creatures (nephesh) and every living thing that moves, with which the waters teemed according to their kinds, and every winged bird after its kind. And God saw that it was good."

verse 30: "And to every animal of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life (nephesh)..."

These passages show that both man and animals are "souls", (nephesh) that have been given God's divine breath of life.

However, one of the greatest misfortunes that bible translators have done is to replace the Hebrew meaning of words to fit their own beliefs, or theology. Translators have changed nephesh or soul when referring to the creation of animals to "living creatures" and to make it appear the "soul" of mankind means immortal soul, which only man possesses.

No where in the Bible does it say that man has an immortal soul that survives after death. Man doesn't have a soul, Man IS a soul. Man and animals are created souls.

Ecclesiastes 3:19,20 - "For the fates of both man and beasts are the same: As one dies, so dies the other – they all have the same breath. Man has no advantage over the animals, since everything is futile. All go to one place; all come from dust, and all return to dust."

It is true that man was made in God's image. Genesis 1:27 says: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them: male and female He created them." And Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and "God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

What a special assignment the first couple was given - to have children, raise families, fill the earth, and rule over every living thing!

Now with regards to "being made in the image of God", some commentators say this means man's unique capacity for moral reasoning, creativity, having a special relationship with God, and having free will. These I listed sound reasonable - But please beware – While commentary's can offer valuable insights, it's important to approach them with discernment, as many commentators reflect their own theological interpretations or doctrinal biases – sometimes shaping Scripture to fit a particular tradition rather than stringing the many pearls of bible truth together.

I'd like to quote from Anthony Buzzards booklet, "What Happens When We Die?" regarding the soul and being created in the image of God. And I quote: "The significant fact which emerges from the examination of the Hebrew concept of "soul" is that immortality is never for one moment associated with it. The creation of man in the image of God lifts him far above the animal in intelligence and moral discernment; but what he shares with the animal kingdom renders him prone to a similar death, for "man is like the beasts that perish: (Psalm 49:12)." End of quote.

I also want to mention Greg Deuble's book, "They never told me THIS in church" in the section "Another Hope", where he gives a warning on how this scripture of God creating man in HIS own image has been "manipulated throughout the centuries to suggest immortality".

I highly recommend reading both Anthony's and Greg's books as these are great biblical resources.

Man does not have an invisible immortal soul. Only God has immortality. Psalm 90:2,3 "Before the mountains were born Or you gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. You turn mortals back into dust and say "Return you sons of mankind." and 1 Timothy 6:16. Says, "God alone has immortality who dwells in unapproachable light whom no one has ever seen or can see." This passage clearly states that God alone has immortality; He cannot die!

So now the next question to ask is: Why do we die?

Well, many people are familiar with the Bible account in Genesis.

After God made the first man Adam, God placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and tend it. (Gen 2:15-17) And God commanded him saying, "From any tree of the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat from it you will certainly die."

Death was still not in the world. It wasn't until Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate from that tree. In Genesis chapter 3, the serpent cunningly deceived Eve by saying in verses 1-7, "Has God really said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You certainly will not die! For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her; and he ate." Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves waist coverings."

The serpent's question to Eve, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" caused Eve to question God's motives – to wonder whether God was holding something good back. Then the serpent's statement, "You certainly will not die", misled and deceived the first couple. This deceptive lie directly contradicted God's clear warning and enticed the first couple to doubt God's truthfulness, HIS goodness and HIS Rulership.

By telling Eve, "you will become like God" suggests that disobedience would lead to enlightenment, to rule themselves, rather than believing and obeying God's words. Their lack of faith led to disobedience.

Now God delivered judgment to the serpent, to Eve, to Adam, as well as the curse on the ground. Genesis 3:14-19, "Then the Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed are you more than all the livestock, and more than any animal of the field. On your belly you will go and dust you will eat, all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you, and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall crush you on the head, and you will bruise him on the heel. To the woman, he said. I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will deliver children, yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. Then to Adam, he said, because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, you shall not eat from it, cursed is the ground because of you; With hard labor you shall eat from it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it will grow for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face, you will eat bread until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

Though Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14), he still chose to eat, and through that choice, sin and death entered the world. Ezekiel 18:4 & 20 plainly states: "The soul who sins it shall die."

In choosing to believe the serpent, Adam and Eve broke the One command given to them, ushering in sin and death. Revelation 12:9 identifies the serpent, as "the serpent of old who is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world". The lie was not just about death; it was an attack on God's truthfulness, authority, righteousness and His love. And this lie laid the foundation for disobedience and false beliefs about death to this day.

Now, what about the belief that people go directly to heaven or hell immediately after death, as if a consciousness travels to another plane of existence.

Ecclesiastes 9:5, "For the living know that they will die, but the dead do not know anything, nor do they have a reward any longer for their memory is forgotten."

In Psalm 146: 4 the psalmist says about man: "His spirit departs, he returns to earth; On that very day his plans perish."

And Ecclesiastes 9:10 – "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or activity, planning, knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going."

The word Sheol is a Hebrew word that means the grave, and it is where both the righteous and the unrighteous go. Solomon says this in Ecclesiastes 9:2, "It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and the unclean; for the person who offers a sacrifice, and for the one who does not sacrifice, as the good person is, so is the Sinner. The one who swears an oath is just as the one who is afraid to swear an oath."

The Greek equivalent of Sheol is Hades or hell. Sheol or hades is not a place of torment, it is the grave. Psalm 13:3 speaks of it as "the sleep of death".

Jesus often spoke of death using the metaphor of sleep. When Jairus's daughter died, Jesus said to the mourners, "The child is not dead but asleep" (Matthew 9:24). Though they laughed at Him, He took her by the hand and raised her. Similarly, when Lazarus died, Jesus told His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him" (John 11:11). The disciples misunderstood, thinking Lazarus was merely resting, so Jesus clarified, "Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). In both cases, Jesus used the language of sleep to describe death. No where in scripture does anyone claim having a consciousness of being "outside" their body or seeing a bright light, or going to an in-between realm or purgatory.

The bible describes death as sleep; an unconscious state; having no awareness of what is happening in the world of the living and are completely unaware of the passing of time. Just as a person in deep sleep knows nothing of the hours that pass, so those who have died rest in silence, awaiting the call of the Messiah, Jesus. When the resurrection occurs, it will feel to them as though only a moment has passed – as if they have just awakened from a brief sleep.

Well, what about going to heaven? Are there faithful people now in heaven? - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Daniel and all the prophets? What about Mary the mother of Jesus, the apostles, and the many disciples' who came after Jesus' death and resurrection? Was their hope in a disembodied soul in heaven? And can they hear our prayers?

Well, as scripture has revealed, people don't have a soul that leaves the body after death. They have all died and are in the grave. All these hoped in God's promise to restore mankind and the earth back to its original design. God's prophetic announcement, at the start of disobedience, promised a seed or descendant of Eve; a savior who would redeem mankind and the world, and crush the serpent, who is the devil. All are waiting in the sleep of death for the Kingdom of God on earth.

God's promise of that seed was announced to Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, in Genesis 13:14 – saying to Abram, "for the land which you see, I will give to you and your descendants forever." Abram believed God, even though he had no children at that time. God then made a covenant saying, "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants

after you. The whole land of Canann, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as in everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:7-8)

Abraham, the father of the faith, was promised by God’s sworn oath, that “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:15-18), a prophecy pointing to the Messiah. Galatians 3:16 identifies this “seed” as Christ. “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, “and to his seeds,” meaning many, but “and to your seed,” meaning One, who is Christ.” Hebrews 6:13-18 gives us a guarantee that God’s OATH and God’s PROMISE of salvation through that one seed are “two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie...”

Moses also foretold the coming of a prophet like himself: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15), a clear messianic expectation echoed in Acts 3:22. Daniel received God’s prophetic word from Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, “And when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his Kingdom. He will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his Kingdom forever.”

Daniel prophesied the timing of the Messiah’s arrival, saying “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself” (Daniel 9:26), showing his awareness of a coming Redeemer who would suffer for others.

In Acts 2:29-36, Peter’s sermon on Pentecost declared of “David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” Peter continues, “So because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He (Christ) was neither abandoned to Hades (grave) nor did his flesh suffer decay. It is this Jesus whom God raised up, a fact to which we are all witnesses. Therefore, since He has been exalted at the right hand of God and has received a promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven but he (meaning David) himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ (from Psalm 110:1) Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Despite their faith and prophetic insight, these patriarchs did not receive the promise in their lifetimes. “David did not ascend into the heavens” (Acts 2:34), affirming that David—and by extension, Abraham, Moses, and Daniel—are “asleep,” awaiting the resurrection at Christ’s return. Peter’s sermon confidently reaffirms their hope in the future fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan through the Messiah, the Son of David, who now sits at the right hand of God.

This hope also applies to Mary, Jesus’s mother, the apostles and Jesus’s disciples. All those faithful to Jesus will rise at the same time when He returns. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, we read Paul’s encouraging words, “Brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest who are without hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again. We also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. By the word of the Lord we declare to you that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, and with the voice of an Archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will be the first to

rise. After that we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.”

Since the faithful—including Mary, and the apostles, and disciples—have died and are asleep in the grave, awaiting Christ’s return, our prayers should not be directed to them. Our prayers should be directed to God the Father through Jesus Christ, who is our living mediator and intercessor. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.”

Jesus, himself, taught us to pray, as some would call, “The Our Father Prayer, (Matthew 6:9-13); first to acknowledge God the Father, his name, which includes everything HE purposes, asking for his Kingdom to come and for HIS will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The prayer continues to ask for daily provisions, forgiveness and deliverance from evil. Jesus also warned against empty repetitive prayers in Matthew 6:7. “And when you are praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.”

With so many scriptures telling us what happens when we die, it may seem hard to imagine that there are so many contradicting doctrines. But discerning Christians should not be surprised! We know the first lie, “You certainly will not die,” set in motion man’s distorted beliefs and practices for thousands of years. 1 Peter 5:8 warns believers to stay alert and spiritually grounded saying, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

The Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) reveals the history of God’s own chosen people, the Israelites, of the cycles of faithfulness followed by rebellion, involving the worship of many false Canaanite gods, (Baal, Asherah, Molech, Astarte to name a few). Some Canaanite rituals included occult necromancy - that involved consulting, summoning or seeking guidance from the dead, honoring ancestors, child sacrifices, and divinations.

Greek philosophical ideas, particularly from Plato, who lived more than 300 years before Jesus’ birth, had spread in the Greco-Roman world. Plato taught a dualistic belief, that the soul is immortal and separate from the body, and that it returns to a higher spiritual realm immediately after death. Dualism viewed the soul to be inherently good and eternal, while the body was corrupt and perishable – hence, the soul, was temporarily imprisoned in the body, and would be liberated at death. This belief mirror’s Satan’s lie about the condition of the dead.

False beliefs and distortions of God’s truth were challenges that both Jesus and the apostle Paul confronted throughout their ministries. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for elevating human traditions above the commandments of God. The Pharisees held firmly to the tradition of washing the hands and utensils, yet they ignored the commandment to honor (or take care of) their own mother and father financially, saying all would be Corban, or given to God. Jesus called them hypocrites in Mark 7:6-8 saying, “But He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the traditions of men.” Jesus is quoting Isaiah 29:13.

In John chapter 8, Jesus again, confronts the religious leaders exposing their deceptive nature of carrying out the desire of Satan, seeking to kill him. Though they were claiming to be Abraham’s descendants, Jesus says to them in verse 39-40, “If you were Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it

is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.”

Verse 44-47, Jesus says to them, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature. Because he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I say the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I speak the truth, why do you not believe me? The one who is of God hears the words of God. For this reason, you do not hear them because you are not of God.”

Jesus warned his disciples in Matthew 24:5 saying, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will mislead many people.” He even questioned whether He would find the faith on the earth when He returns. (Luke 18:8).

The apostle Paul, likewise, battled against a flood of pagan ideologies as he proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom of God, the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah, and the hope of resurrection of the dead throughout the Greco-Roman world. In Athens, he was grieved by the city’s devotion to idols (Acts 17:16), and in Ephesus, his message threatened the worship of Artemis, sparking a riot (Acts 19:23-29). He warned the early church not to be “taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy” (Colossians 2:8), urging believers to cling to Christ alone.

In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul further warns of the danger of deceptive spiritual leaders or false apostles, who, just like Satan, disguise themselves as righteous. “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

As late as the 1st century, Gnosticism emerged, which taught that salvation comes through obtaining secret knowledge (gnosis) of spiritual truth and was only revealed for those in the inner circle; with dualism, and belief that a lesser deity god created the world. By the second and third centuries, church fathers such as Origen and Augustine of Hippo, along with the political ruler Emperor Constantine and many church bishops began the arduous battle to unify the many opposing church beliefs under one Roman state ruled and controlled church. The Council of Nicaea (325 AD), the Council of Constantinople (381 AD), and the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) to name a few; These councils debated, changed, reshaped, rehashed and redefined church doctrines.

Though the full history of the early church fathers lies beyond the scope of this talk, I urge you to investigate how over the centuries, these embraced Hellenistic philosophies—often blending pagan concepts with Christian doctrine in ways that obscured the gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus and the apostles preached. Platonic beliefs of the immortal soul, ascending to heaven or hell, as well as, the adoption of the trinity, the eternally begotten son, the veneration of Mary, as well as Jesus’ dual nature of being fully God and fully man. And various church creeds (the Nicæan, and Athanasian Creeds) were written and established and later updated and are still recited in many churches today. These creeds are far removed from the teachings of scripture and Jesus, the Messiah.

The creed of Jesus, the Shema, which Jesus said is the most important commandment, has been dismissed; erased from the later church pulpits. The “Hear O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD. Love

the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” just vanished. (Deut. 6:4-6 and Mark 12:29,30. In my early years in the catholic church, I never heard of the Shema; it was never recited, taught, or mentioned. This creed affirms Jesus’ belief that the LORD God is ONE LORD, and that we must love HIM with our whole being. And it must be our creed, as well.

I invite you to read the excellent article written by Barbara Buzzard on the Shema, entitled, “Why Don’t We Pray as Jesus Did?”, in the October 2025 Focus on the Kingdom magazine.

From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus proclaimed God’s Gospel or good news – to call humanity back to God through repentance and faith. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled, he said. “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in that Gospel”.

Belief of that good news of the Kingdom of God was so important to Jesus that He said, ‘I must preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because I was commissioned for this purpose.’ (Luke 4:43) He tells us to “seek first the Kingdom of God and HIS righteousness and all these things will be added to you”(Matthew 6:33), urging his followers to prioritize the future promises of God and setting things right, trusting that everything else will be provided in due time.

To believe the words of Jesus is to believe in the very words of God Himself. John 12:44-45 says, “Then Jesus called out, “The person who believes in me does not believe in me, but in the One who commissioned me. And the one who sees and understands me, sees and understands Him who commissioned me.” And in verses 49-51 in John 12, Jesus says, “For I have not spoken on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who commissioned me has given me a command as to what I should say and what I should speak, And I know that His command means Life in the Coming Age. So, the things I speak, I speak just as the Father instructed me.”

While faith and belief are closely related and sometimes used interchangeably throughout the bible, scripture shows that they’re not exactly the same. The demons believe that God is real, but they do not trust or obey HIM. James 2:19 says, “You believe that God is One person; that is right! Even the demons believe that and tremble.” So, belief alone, without action or trust, is incomplete.

Faith goes beyond belief. It is trusting God’s promises even when you cannot see the outcome. As Hebrews 11:1 confirms: “Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for, the conviction of what we do not see.” Faith starts with hearing the message, then believing that message, then taking action.

Paul writes in Romans 10:14, “How then will people call on him unless they have believed him? And how will they believe him unless they have heard him preaching the Gospel? And how will they hear it unless someone preaches it to them?”

Acts 8:12 says, “But when they believed Phillip as he was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were being baptized.” True faith responds to the call of God’s Kingdom, and knowing everything regarding Jesus, his atoning substitutionary death, his resurrection, ascension to the right hand of God, and awaiting Messiah Jesus’s second coming. Water baptism demonstrates our commitment, obedience, and hope in God’s Kingdom on a renewed earth through Christ Jesus.

Prior to raising Lazarus from the grave, Martha, one of Lazarus’ sisters, went out to meet Jesus. Martha then said to Jesus, “lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died. Yet even now I know very

well that whatever you ask of God, God is going to give it to you.” Jesus reassured her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that He is going to rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” He then asks her, “Do you believe this? She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have come to believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was destined to be born into the world.” (John 11:21-27) Martha clearly showed her faith in the one God and His son, Messiah and in the hope of the resurrection.

Let’s revisit the question asked at the beginning: “Does it really matter what I believe about what happens when we die?” Who did Adam and Eve believe and where did they put their trust? They were given a clear command from God, yet they chose to believe the serpent’s deception instead. They believed a false word instead of having faith in God’s word. To have faith in God would have meant trusting that his command was for their good, believing his warning, even though they had not yet experienced death, and remaining loyal and obedient despite temptation.

Jesus, uniquely created in the womb of his mother (Luke 1:35), a human being, just like us, is our example of remaining loyal and obedient to God. Hebrews 4:15 says of Jesus, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.” Jesus was obedient to God even unto death, as Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death – even death on a cross.”

Again, the Hebrews writer in 5:7-9 says, “In his earthly life, Jesus offered up prayers and requests with loud crying and tears to the One who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through the things which he suffered. Having been perfected, he became to all of those who obey him the source of the salvation of the age to come,…”

On the very night that He was betrayed, Jesus told his disciples that they would be scattered and have tribulation in this world, however He was not alone because God the Father was with him. He comforts his disciples saying, “Take heart, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:32-33) Jesus was declaring victory over death, freely giving his perfect human life for the sins of mankind, fulfilling God’s great plan as that one seed that will crush Satan, trusting God would not abandon him to the grave, but raising him up from the dead and given authority to judge.

Jesus said in John 5:21 to 29, “For just as the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, so also the Son makes alive, whom he wishes. The Father judges no one, but has put all judgment into the hands of the Son, so that everyone may honor the Son as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who commissioned him as His agent. I tell you on the highest authority that the one who hears my Gospel-word and thus believes the One who commissioned me has the Life of the Age to Come, and will not come into judgment, but he that has been transferred from death to life. I am telling you the truth; the hour is coming, and now already, is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will come to life. Just as the Father has life in Himself, so also He has granted the Son to have life in himself, and He has given him authority to carry out judgment because He is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this. Because the hour is coming when all who are in their

graves will hear the voice of the Son of Man. They will come out of their graves, the ones who have done what is good to a resurrection of life and those who have done what is evil to a resurrection of judgment.”

Yes — it truly does matter what we believe about what happens when we die. Our understanding of death and the afterlife shapes the very foundation of our faith and our hope. From the beginning of humanity’s disobedience, false teachings and deceptive philosophies have clouded the truth, leading many away from the promises of God. Satan, the father of lies, has worked tirelessly to distort the message of life, whispering that death is merely a transition to another realm, or that we possess an immortal soul that lives on apart from resurrection. But these ideas are not from God — they are designed to undermine the Righteousness, Justice, and Love of our Creator.

God’s Word is clear: He is both loving and just. Jesus Himself declared, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) This is not a vague promise of spiritual survival — it is a declaration of resurrection through Christ Jesus. The gospel of the Kingdom of God is not about going to heaven. At the appointed time, Jesus is coming to set up God’s Kingdom on a renewed earth and has promised those who believe in Him eternal life.

Our trust and hope must rest in God’s saving grace, which is His Kingdom, through His chosen King, Jesus the Messiah (Acts 20:24,25). Our belief must be backed up by listening to the words of Jesus, obeying His commands, and remaining faithful to Him until He returns. Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27) To be judged righteous, we must walk in obedience, putting away false beliefs and lies that have long deceived the world. Faithfulness is not passive — it is a daily commitment to live by the truth, to reject deception, and cling to the words of Jesus.

Let us not be deceived by comforting myths or ancient traditions. Scripture tells us plainly: “The dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) — they sleep, awaiting the trumpet call of Christ’s return. Only through resurrection can we enter the fullness of life in the age to come.

So let us hold fast to the true gospel — the good news of the Kingdom of God, Jesus’s death and resurrection, and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. This is the faith that saves. This is the truth that sets us free.

Thank you!

Merryl DeMott

Proverbs 3:5-6	Hebrews 6:13-18	John 12:49-51
2 Timothy 3:16,17	(Deuteronomy 18:15),	James 2:19
Genesis 2:7	Acts 3:22	Hebrews 11:1
Genesis 1:20,21	2 Samuel 7:12-13	Romans 10:14
Genesis 1:30	(Daniel 9:26)	Acts 8:12
Ecclesiastes 3:19,20	Acts 2:29-36	(John 11:21-27)
Genesis 1:27	Psalm 110:1	(Luke 1:35),
Genesis 1:28	(Acts 2:34)	Hebrews 4:15
(Psalm 49:12)	1 Thessalonians 4:13-17	Philippians 2:8
Psalm 90:2,3	1 Timothy 2:5	Hebrews 5:7-9
1 Timothy 6:16	(Matthew 6:9-13	(John 16:32-33)
(Gen 2:15-17)	Matthew 6:7	John 5:21 to 29
Genesis 3:1-7	1 Peter 5:8	(John 3:16)
Genesis 3:14-19	Mark 7:6-8	(Acts 20:24,25
(1 Timothy 2:14)	Isaiah 29:13	(John 10:27)
Ezekiel 18:4 & 20	John 8:39-40	
Revelation 12:9	John 8:44-47,	
Ecclesiastes 9:5	Matthew 24:5	
Psalm 146: 4	(Luke 18:8)	
Ecclesiastes 9:10	(Acts 17:16)	
Ecclesiastes 9:2	(Acts 19:23-29)	
Psalm 13:3	(Colossians 2:8	
(Matthew 9:24).	2 Corinthians 11:13-15	
(John 11:11).	(Deut. 6:4-6	
(John 11:14)	Mark 12:29,30	
Genesis 13:14	Mark 1:15	
(Genesis 17:7-8)	Luke 4:43	
(Genesis 22:15-18),	(Matthew 6:33)	
Galatians 3:16	John 12:44-45	