

## Brief on The meanings of sleep<sup>1</sup>

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

“Then was he [Jesus] seen by more than five hundred brethren at once: of whom many remain until this present and some are fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:6)

In the Bible the word “sleep” means several things:

- It means being alive but not awake and thus in the repose of sleep:

“And he [Jesus] cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me?” (Mt. 26:40)

“And a certain young man named Eutychus, sitting on the window, being oppressed with a deep sleep (as Paul was long preaching), by occasion of his sleep fell from the third loft down, and was taken up dead.” (Acts 20:9)

- It means being awake but sluggish, slothful, or unaware:

“And that knowing the season; that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed.” (Rom. 13:11)

“Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch, and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night.” (1 Thes. 5:6-7)

- It means being dead and thus when the body dies:

“So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.” (3 Ki. 2:10)

“After that he [Jesus] said to them: Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. His disciples therefore said: Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. But Jesus spoke of his death; and they thought that he spoke of the repose of sleep.” (Jn. 11:11-13)

“Then was he [Jesus] seen by more than five hundred brethren at once: of whom many remain until this present and some are fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:6)

- And the elect whose bodies are dead are said to be sleeping in the Lord:

“For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them who have slept through Jesus, will God bring with him.” (1 Thes. 4:13)

“And falling on his knees, he [St. Stephen] cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord. And Saul was consenting to his death.” (Acts 7:59)

However, when sleep means dead and thus when the body dies, it does not mean that the dead persons are not conscious. It means that their bodies are dead but their souls are conscious and reside either in the hell of the damned, in purgatory, or in heaven during the New Testament era or in the Limbo of the Fathers during the Old Testament era.

The Bible speaks of men who died before the General Judgment at the end of the world who are in the hell of the damned, or were in the Limbo of the Fathers (Abraham’s Bosom) during the Old Testament era, or are in heaven since the New Covenant era.

When the holy Prophet Samuel’s body was dead, his soul was in the Limbo of the Fathers. And he appeared upon the face of the earth to rebuke King Saul:

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<sup>1</sup> RJMI’s Briefs are Long Commentaries contained in the end of *The Catholic Bible*, revised by RJMI.

“And Samuel died, and all Israel was gathered together, and they mourned for him, and buried him in his house in Ramatha. And David rose and went down into the wilderness of Pharan.” (1 Ki. 25:1)

“Now Samuel was dead... And Samuel said to Saul: Why hast thou troubled me that I should be brought up [from the Limbo of the Fathers]? (1 Ki. 28:3, 15)

Jesus speaks of the poor, sick beggar Lazarus and the greedy rich man. After their bodies died, their souls were still alive; Lazarus was in Abraham’s Bosom (the Limbo of the Fathers) and the rich man was in the hell of the damned.<sup>2</sup> And the rich man also saw Abraham alive but without his body, as Abraham’s body was dead and in the grave:

“And decaying, he [Abraham] died in a good old age... And Isaac and Ismael his sons buried him in the double cave, which was situated in the field of Ephron the son of Seor the Hethite, over against Mamre.” (Gen. 25:8-10)

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom...” (Lk. 16:22-23)

While the bodies of Moses and Elias were dead, their souls were in the Limbo of the Fathers. And they came upon the face of the earth and appeared with Jesus on Mount Tabor when Jesus was transfigured:

“And after six days Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him.” (Mt. 17:1-3)

When Jesus died, he went to the Limbo of the Fathers, the highest level in hell, where the Old Testament elect were alive but did not have their bodies:

“Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust: that he might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit, in which also coming he preached to those spirits [human souls] that were in prison [the Limbo of the Fathers].” (1 Pt. 3:18-19)

And after Jesus rose from the dead, the bodies of the Old Testament elect rose out of their tombs and were united to their souls. Note carefully that it does not say that their souls rose out of their tombs, as we know that their souls were in the Limbo of the Fathers. It says that their bodies arose:

“And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, came into the holy city, and appeared to many.” (Mt. 27:52-53)

This was necessary so that the Old Testament elect could be baptized, confirmed, and fed the Holy Eucharist. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he took the souls of the Old Testament elect with him and their bodies returned to the grave.

Before the General Judgment and when the Fifth Seal is opened, saints who have died are under the altar of God in heaven crying out and thus are alive, alive in their souls in heaven but dead in their bodies which will not be resurrected until just before the General Judgment:

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they

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<sup>2</sup> While the souls of the damned are alive, they are said to be dead, just as men on earth in deadly sins are said to be dead. Their souls are said to be dead because they are in a state of damnation. And the souls in the hell of the damned are in a state of everlasting damnation. (See commentary on Jn. 11:26.)

cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord (holy and true) dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them one; and it was said to them that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow servants, and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up.” (Apoc. 6:9-11)

*The heresy that souls of dead men are literally asleep or cease to exist*

Beware of the heresy that the souls of men literally sleep when they die and will not awake until the General Judgment, or the heresy that when men die their souls cease to exist. The former heresy takes out of context St. Paul’s word “sleep” to mean that both the souls and bodies of dead men sleep and hence not only their bodies sleep. The dogma is that when men die, their bodies are said to sleep but their souls do not sleep nor cease to exist. While their bodies are dead and decaying, their souls are awake and conscious and reside either in heaven, purgatory, or hell. During the Old Testament era, the souls of the elect who died were conscious and resided in the Limbo of the Fathers. And the souls of the reprobates who died were conscious and resided, as they still do, in the hell of the damned. The Bible contains several proofs of this dogma. Take the following examples:

- After the holy Prophet Samuel died and his body was dead and decaying, he, in his soul, came from the Limbo of the Fathers to relay a message to King Saul. (1 Ki. 28:11-15)
- After Moses and Elias were dead and their bodies were dead and decayed, they, in their souls, came from the Limbo of the Fathers and appeared with Jesus during his transfiguration. (Mt. 17:1-4)
- The apostle St. John was taken to heaven and saw some of the elect who died and thus whose bodies were dead and decayed. He saw twenty-four ancients: “And the four and twenty ancients and the four living creatures fell down and adored God that sitteth upon the throne, saying: Amen, Alleluia.” (Apoc. 19:4) And he saw one of his brethren, a human being and thus not an angel: “And I fell down before his feet to adore him. And he saith to me: See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus. Adore God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Apoc. 19:10)
- St. John saw the souls of the martyrs in heaven crying out under the altar of God: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls [not bodies] of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord (holy and true), dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them one; and it was said to them, that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow servants, and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up.” (Apoc. 6:9-11)
- When the elect died during the Old Testament era, their souls were alive and went to the Limbo of the Fathers but their bodies were dead and went to the grave and decayed and thus their dead bodies are said to have slept. After Jesus rose from the dead “the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection came into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Mt. 27:52-53) Hence the Old Testament

elect's bodies were re-united to their souls after Jesus' resurrection so that they could be baptized, confirmed, and fed the Holy Eucharist. After which, their bodies returned to the grave and Jesus took their souls with him when he ascended into heaven.

- And Jesus speaks of the dead poor Lazarus who was in Abraham's Bosom (the Limbo of the Fathers) and the dead rich man who was in the hell of the damned and both were alive in their souls even though their bodies were dead and decayed: "And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: And he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." (Lk. 16:22-24)

Hence Jesus' following words, just before he raised Lazarus from the dead, apply immediately to souls and then later to bodies. Not until the end of the world will the bodies of the elect be resurrected in a glorified state:

"Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: And every one that liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die for ever. Believest thou this?" (Jn. 11:25-26)

Jesus is speaking of the souls of the elect because they live forever even after their bodies die. He is also speaking of the bodies of the elect that will also live forever in incorruption when the elect get their bodies back during the General Judgment at the end of the world.

Beware also, then, of the heresy that when souls are said to be "dead" it means that they no longer exist or that they are literally asleep. The dogma is that the souls of the dead reprobates, and the living who are guilty of deadly sin, exist and are conscious and thus are not literally dead or asleep. Their souls are said to be dead or asleep because they exist in a state of damnation. St. Paul says that men who have not died and are guilty of original sin or mortal sin are dead, that is, in a state of damnation:

"For she that liveth in delicacies is dead while she is living." (1 Tim. 5:6)

You were dead in your offences and sins wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief... But God, (who is rich in mercy,) for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved)." (Eph. 2:1-5)

Again, speaking to those who are alive but in deadly sin, St. Paul says,

"Wherefore he saith: Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall enlighten thee." (Eph. 5:14)

And Jesus said,

"Let the dead bury their dead." (Mt. 8:22)

The dead cannot bury the dead unless they are still alive, and thus Jesus means men who are not literally dead but are in a state of damnation. You can call them "the walking dead."

Hence when we read that souls are killed or destroyed, it means that they are in a state of damnation even though they still exist and are conscious. Jesus, son of Sirach, says,

"The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men." (Eccus. 21:3)

And Jesus Christ says,

“Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Mt. 10:28)

Jesus does not mean that their souls are literally killed but that they are in a state of damnation. This is also proved when Jesus says,

“I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will shew you whom you shall fear; fear ye him who, after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear him.” (Lk. 12:4-5)

If the souls of the reprobates will cease to exist and their bodies will no longer exist, then why should they fear being cast into hell!

*For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men*

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