

Afterlife, negates significance of death

Is it not true that an afterlife in Heaven before the resurrection, would subtract from the significance of death?

Psychopannychists or “soul sleep” advocates claim that the power of death is something that is entirely physical. If Believers live a life on Earth, and then in the process of dying go to Heaven to be with the Lord before the resurrection, it is claimed that “death” really has no significance. **This is an incorrect assumption about the significance of death**—because even if survivors of a deceased person might believe that a loved one is in the presence of Yeshua in Heaven, such survivors still have to cope with the loss or vacuum that the deceased has left. *Death separates people*. Even with some people able to experience a degree of comfort knowing that a loved one is with the Lord, survivors are still separated from those whom they knew, and they have to bear the brunt of living their lives on Earth without their loved ones’ company, council, and involvement in life-cycle events.

Death as a force to be reckoned with often leaves a very bitter aftermath for those who have had to confront it. Even if all of the persons involved have confessed faith in the Lord, and know Yeshua as Savior, and believe in an intermediate afterlife in Heaven before resurrection—the force of death will take its (serious) toll. Simply consider the child who will never grow up having met a grandparent or a parent, who pre-deceased birth or who died when the child was very young. Even if this child grows up hearing stories about a grandfather who died before he was born, the most personal connection the grandchild can make to the person is probably visiting a cemetery plot. Even if it is believed that a family member is in Heaven, there is still very much a desire in the heart of a survivor to see the Lord return in glory, so an extended family can be fully reunited across the generations. Bruce Milne further describes,

“Death’s sting [1 Corinthians 15:55-56] is truly felt, no matter the circumstances or the degree of conviction with which Christians experience the passing of a loved one. The pain often goes very, very deep, and commonly the wound never fully heals. A conviction that the loved one is now ‘with the Lord’, while clearly a source of comfort, may do little even after the passage of time to counteract the numbing blow of the loss.”¹

Each one of us in our lives has had to experience the death of a loved one—a husband or wife, a father or mother, a close relative, a dear friend, a mentor—and throughout our lives we will always entertain thoughts, at least in part, wondering what it would or could mean to us were they still with us. All of us who believe in an intermediate afterlife in Heaven, and who believe that a deceased loved one is presently basking in the presence of Yeshua HaMashiach and all of the other holy ones—have wanted such a person alive **and with us**. Each day we wonder what our lives would be like with them present with us, especially at those most happy moments like a wedding, a birth of a new child, a graduation, or even a special trip. Every day, we have to carry with us the resonating pain that the power of death has caused. We eagerly anticipate the day when we can see our departed grandparents, parents, extended family, and friends again!

The psychopannychist is directly guilty of robbing a survivor of the little bit of comfort he or she has in knowing that a loved one is in Heaven until the time of the resurrection (John 10:10a). While there is a significant error of many people thinking that those who die in faith go to Heaven, never to have their bodies resurrected—those of us who have always believed in the provisionality of the intermediate state are told to think that our loved ones are only steadily decomposing in a grave. What does such a thought do especially to those who have derived

¹ Bruce Milne, *The Message of Heaven & Hell* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 169.

comfort from their loved one being in Heaven, a family member or friend who may have died suddenly or tragically? *Their mangled corpse is just falling apart even more as though a dog was hit by a car?!*

Every one of us who has lost a loved one carries with us the pain and effects of their departure, and are quite aware of the power and significance of death on human existence. We know that death is an enemy that needs to be defeated!