

Last Day 15 – What happens to the soul at the time of death?

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

QUESTION: What happens to the soul when a person is just about to die?

ANSWER:

“True” death – when people “really” die, rather than pretending to, as we see in movies - has become something that is shielded from public view here in the West. Maybe it is because of this that people here in the West rarely think about death.

Certainly 100 years ago or less, people in the West would commonly come into contact with people who were dying or who had died.

However there are still many of us who will have seen people who have died. Some of us have actually sat with people as they are at the point of death. What exactly is happening to the person at that time?

Muhammad (may perfect peace and security be upon him) told the Muslims in detail what happens at the time of death in a thought provoking hadeeth (statement of his). We will spend a little time over the next few articles talking about this one hadeeth which discusses the events around death.

In this article, we will look at the first part of the hadeeth. It is a lengthy hadeeth but worth reading carefully and pondering over.

Al Baraa ibn Aazib, one of the Companions of Muhammad (may perfect peace and security be upon him), said

‘We went out with the Prophet (may perfect peace and security be upon him) on a funeral of a man from the Muslims of Madinah. So we came to the grave and he, (may perfect peace and security be upon him) had a stick, with which he was prodding the earth. He began looking towards the sky, and looking towards the earth, and raising his gaze and lowering it three times, and then he said:

Seek Allaah’s refuge from the Punishment of the Grave!

...two or three times, and then he (may perfect peace and security be upon him) said:

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O Allaah, I seek your refuge from the Punishment of the Grave.

...three times,

And then he (may perfect peace and security be upon him) said:

The believing servant, when he is departing from this world and going on to the Hereafter – then some angels from the heaven descend upon him, with white faces as if their faces were the sun. With them, there are shrouds from the shrouds of Paradise and perfume for embalming from the perfume of Paradise – until they sit at a distance away from him that can be reached by the sight.

And then the Angel of Death comes, until he sits by his head and he says:

O Pure soul! (and in one narration - at rest), come out to forgiveness from Allaah and His Pleasure!

So it comes out flowing just like a drop of fluid flows out of a vessel.

So he (the Angel of Death) takes it, then every angel between the Heavens and the Earth makes supplication for it and every angel in the Heaven and the Gates of the (lowest) Heaven are opened for him.

And there are no inhabitants (i.e. angels) present at any gate except that they make supplication to Allaah that his soul be taken up from their direction.

So when he (the Angel of Death) takes it, he does not leave it in his hand even for the blink of an eye until he takes it and places it in that shroud and in that perfume – and that is His Saying (in the Qur’aan):

‘Our Messengers take his soul in Death, and they do not fall short in their duty.’

And a smell comes from him like the smell of the purest musk found on the face of the earth.

Then they ascend with it (the believing soul) and they do not pass by any (group of angels) except that they say:

What is this pure soul?

So they say:

It is so and so, the son of so and so.

...mentioning him by the finest names which he used to be called in this world, until they take him to the lowest heaven and they request that it be opened for him – so it is opened for him.

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And then the closest ones from every heaven accompany him to the next heaven until he reaches the seventh heaven – and Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic says:

Write down the record of My servant in Illiyyeen (the highest heaven)!

(And this goes along with the statement in the Qur'an:

**'And what will explain to you what is Illiyyoon?
(in it will be) the written down record.
Witnessed by those drawn close.'**

[Soorah al Mutaffifeen (the 83rd chapter) verses 19-21]]

So he (may perfect peace and security be upon him) said:

Then his record will be written down in Illiyyeen. Then it will be said:

Return him to the earth, for I have promised them that: From it I created you, and to it I shall return you, then I shall take you out from it again.