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Have you ever thought you knew God's will in a category of life, but then someone showed you from God's Word in black and white what God's will actually is? One of the truths in God's Word that I was shown by way of the teachings in The Way Ministry is that the dead are not alive now. The Bible teaches that once a person dies, he or she will stay dead until Jesus Christ returns or until the later resurrections. This means that my beloved grandmothers are not still alive in heaven or anywhere else, as I once thought. Understanding this truth from God's Word answered many questions for me about communicating with loved ones who have died, such as praying to them or asking them for help. After reading the many clear verses in God's Word, this subject made sense. The clear verses about death in God's Word established this truth for me.

But one day, while reading the Gospel of Matthew, I came across a section of scripture that seemed to contradict what I'd seen in those many clear verses. This record in Matthew seemed to indicate that the Old Testament believers Moses and Elijah were indeed alive long after their deaths. What about all the clear verses I had read on this topic? Did this one section of scripture negate them? I found out that the answer is no. When a verse or section of scripture seems to contradict the clear verses on a Biblical subject, we don't throw out the clear verses and emphasize the unclear ones. As honest workmen of God's Word, we adhere to this Biblical truth: a difficult verse must be understood in light of the clear verses. This truth helps us get to the accuracy of God's Word.

Regarding the topic of life after death, God's Word has many clear verses stating that the dead are not alive now. Psalms 146:4 explains what happens when a person dies.

*Psalms 146:4:*

*His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.*

The truth that a man's or woman's thoughts perish upon dying is supported in Ecclesiastes 9.

*Ecclesiastes 9:5,6:*

*For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.*

*Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.*

These and many other clear verses established for me that those no longer alive are not involved in the activities and goings-on here on earth or in heaven. All people who have died, with the exception of Jesus Christ, stay dead until the events of either the gathering together of born-again believers described in I Thessalonians 4 or the later resurrections.

When I read Matthew 17:1-3 in light of the many clear verses about death, I saw what seemed to be a discrepancy. This alerted me to look more closely at this section of scripture.

*Matthew 17:1-3:*

*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

*And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [Elijah] talking with him.*

A cursory reading of verse 3 in this section led me to think that Moses and Elijah were physically present, talking to Jesus. But by investigating a bit further, I learned that the word "appeared" is translated from the Greek word *optomai*, meaning "envisioning." Jesus, Peter, James, and John saw this phenomenon in their minds. Verse 9 supports that this was a vision.

*Matthew 17:9:*

*And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

Moses and Elijah were not seen physically by the eyes of these men, but rather God communicated to them by revelation. (For further information on these verses, other difficult verses, and the many clear verses on this topic, see the book *Are the Dead Alive Now?* by Victor Paul Wierwille, available for purchase at [The Way International Bookstore](http://www.theway.org/bookstore).)

If one passage of scripture seems to contradict the clear scriptures on a particular subject, it behooves an honest workman of God's Word to more closely examine the difficult passage in order to rightly divide it. In this case, I saw that the difficulty was in my understanding of the word "appeared" in the King James Version. In other cases, the difficulty may arise from an error in translation. After I resolved the difficulty I saw in this record in Matthew, I could then see how it fit with the clear verses I knew.

Since the Word of God as originally given cannot contradict itself, when we come across a difficult verse in the Word, we do not throw out all the clear verses and accept the difficult verse. Rather, as honest workmen of the Word, we take the time to examine the difficult verse, adhering to this truth: a difficult verse (or section of scripture) must be understood in light of the clear verses.

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