



FLATLINE • Near Death Experiences

As we seek to investigate and understand the after-life, Near Death Experiences just might pull back the curtains, and allow us to peak into the nature and reality of life after death.

December 29, 2001 Arnhem, The Netherlands – The December 15th issue of *The Lancet* (a medical journal) published results of a ten-year study, “Near-Death Experience in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest.” In the report, near-death experiences are defined as “the reported memory of all impressions during a special state of consciousness, including specific elements such as out-of-body experience, pleasant feelings and seeing a tunnel, a light, a being of light, deceased relatives, or a life review.”

The authors are Dutch cardiologists lead by Dr. Pim van Lommel in the Division of Cardiology at the Hospital Rijnstate in Arnhem, The Netherlands.

An Interview with Dr Pim van Lommel from Near-death.com:

Q: What is doing the perceiving since it is not a conscious brain, eye and ear system?

Exactly, exactly. That means when there is no activity in the brain, let's say a flat EEG, and people can still have their full consciousness with cognition, emotion, with memories from their youth, all for the possibility of perceiving. That means there must be something that can be received by your brain, so it is something outside your body that you can receive in your body by your brain.

Q: Do you think that is indirect proof of a soul-spirit?

No, I never use the word because everybody has their own ideas about it. So I never use the word mind, soul or spirit because I think it's very hard to know what someone else means. So I talk about consciousness and memories and self-identity.

Q: Can you give us an example?

It was a 43-year-old man who had an out-of-hospital (cardiac) arrest and so when he was admitted to the hospital, they had been doing CPR for more than half an hour. So he was deeply unconscious and cyanotic when he was admitted to the hospital. He was in very bad shape. He had no blood pressure, no heartbeat, and so they were performing CPR. And after 1.5 hours in the hospital at last he had blood pressure and heart beat, but there was brain damage. So, there was no spontaneous respiration. So they had to intubate him and when the nurse intubated him, he had to remove the dental prosthesis and put it on the crash cart. And the patient had to be on artificial respiration for more than one week in ICU and then he came back to the cardiac ward. And the first time the nurse entered his room to give him medication, the patient recognized the nurse and said, 'Oh, you was the one who was there when I was admitted in the hospital and you took out my dentures, the dental prosthesis, to intubate me. And he could describe exactly what doctors were there, how they looked like, what the room looked like. And the nurse was so upset because he had never heard of an NDE before. So, he rang us. And we explained to him and we asked him to write down everything that had happened.

For thousands of years, philosophers have debated over whether our souls live on after we die. Some have said NDE (Near Death Experiences) research provides conclusive evidence that we do, in fact, live on; others have tried to propose alternate theories.



1. Do you think this research settles the debate? Why? What might be an alternate explanation?

Visions of Heaven

2. In a short paragraph, describe what you think heaven would be like. Include what people will look like, surroundings, time, and activities.

“The Being of Light.” from Paranormal.about.com:

June 22, 1994, I arose early on that day and immediately headed downstairs to fetch my morning coffee. Two of my sons were still living at home. I remember wondering if they would hear me call to them, but they responded within seconds. A ruptured aneurysm in the brain had caused me to fall down on my living room floor at exactly the same time of morning, and in exactly the same place as their father had died from a massive heart attack five years earlier. A call to 911 had rushed me to the nearest hospital. They assured me that everything that was humanly possible would be done for me, and their honesty and sincerity enabled me to feel very much at peace within myself about nearing the end of what I always felt was a very good life. At some point, I awoke after nine hours of surgery and could comprehend that I had lived through it. What I didn't know was that I had been in a deep sleep for four days, but what I did know was that I had taken a beautiful trip to the other side of life. My journey began as I stood behind a closed door. I was concerned about not being able to stand there for any great length of time, and communicated that thought to a beautiful Being of Light who was holding me up as I waited to enter. I was told that I could not open the door, but that it would open for me when it was ready. As the door finally began to open, the light was overwhelming. I entered a tunnel and had a life review for what seemed to have lasted only a few seconds. I then found myself being escorted by this loving Being of Light to the most beautiful garden that anyone could dream imaginable. I eventually came to a beautiful meadow that I could not cross alone. I was to wait for my husband to come and take me the rest of the way...

3. Do you think this person's description is symbolic, like a dream, or are they really seeing heaven?
4. Discuss this statement: Heaven can not be both real, and at the same time, whatever you want it to be.

Visions of, er...Well, Not Heaven

So, does everyone have happy thoughts when they die? Apparently not. It seems there are recent studies that document more hellish experiences. These cases are not as prevalent, because they tend to be suppressed, and when the experience is resurfaced, through hypnosis, people are usually “ticked-off” that you made them remember. Here's an example.

“Cathy's NDE.” from Mindspring.com:

Cathy (my girlfriend) has had an NDE after being brought in to the first-aid room of a hospital in Holland. I don't know if it is essential to mention that she had tried to commit suicide (pills). She was unconscious when she was found at home and was brought to the hospital like that.



She remembers to have seen her body lying in the first-aid room, viewed from a high corner near the ceiling; the medical staff was working hard on her 'body', details from this were precisely given by her afterwards without ever having seen the room before or later. She felt quite neutral, even when she heard a doctor or nurse say: 'Oh, there she goes again'.

Then she had an experience like traveling through a dark tunnel, seeing to the right of the end of the tunnel a female person, dressed in white, with dark hair. Then she saw IT, the music and colors that were indescribably beautiful and a light with such an intense beauty and mildness as never before. She was not allowed to go through. All of a sudden she found herself again at the entrance of the tunnel, where it was dark, there was no sound at all. She felt like being one of the many who were there, walking around and around, being doomed to do so eternally. It was the worst thing that a person can ever experience. There was suffering, pain, remorse, guilt. The 'many who were there' were without any body-form like we know, they merely looked like little packets or little dull colored balls and were to her belief rapists and murderers. One of these 'packets' was sort of allowed to leave this place without her knowing exactly how and by whom. She envied this 'entity' for it, the suffering was unbearable. She does not know how long she has been there, she awoke in the IC-unit of the hospital, tied to her bed.

This experience has influenced her life tremendously, changing everything that was before. People told her later that her stories about the whole hospital-thing were rather incoherent, but one aspect remained always the same, her NDE. Does this indicate something what we could call a hell? Is this what was made clear to her: change your life or look what will happen when you die?

5. So what do you think about Hell? Do you believe there is such a place? What is it?

6. Who goes there, and why?

7. Or, do you think everyone gets into heaven? What about someone like Hitler, or an evil roommate – do they get in, too?

8. How do you think God decides who goes where?

9. Where do you think you would go? Why?

The Tunnel

Here's another common phenomenon in NDE's.

"My Tunnel of Light." from unsolvedmysteries.com:

I was giving birth to my child and was rushed to have a c-section. I went asleep and saw a bright tunnel of light. A piece fell over me. I thought I am going to die and the guess what when I awoke the doctors said, I almost did not make it. Oddly years later an uncle told me he had the same light experience.



10. So what do you think this tunnel is?

Life Review

In most all NDE's there is a sense of 'life review' before a Supreme Being.

“Daniel Rosenblit’s Near-Death Experience.” from near-death.com:

Then, I saw it was as if I had been living behind a curtain my whole life. All of a sudden, this veil of illusion was lifted and the floodlights were shining on me. I saw Reality. Reality is that everything is really veiled spirit. Incredibly, I saw that I had been on display my whole life. Every thought, word, and deed of mine had been recorded since my birth and was now being fully exposed. Everything that I ever did in secret was now being brought out into the light for review in front of God and all the heavenly hosts!

My entire life was now laid out bare before the Lord and all the heavenly hosts. I knew that they were all there as the awareness of their presence was clearly felt by me. It was as though all the actions of my entire life had happened at the same time.

I was shown in reality my entire life had been one huge test and I was now being graded on literally everything! Every word, deed, and even thought. My judge was not some immense being on a great white throne. Something had come out of myself (I believe that it was my soul) and sat in judgment of me. I had never recalled ever being in touch with this aspect of myself before. “It” was not partial to me even though “it” resided within me. “It” sat in judgment of my entire life taking a totally objective and impartial role. I knew “it” would just as soon plunge me into hell rather than offend God. “It” knew perfection which was God’s standard, and all of my actions were compared to this standard. By perfection, I mean pure love. I was shown that pure love was serving God and others without having any self-centered motives at all. I saw that pure love is God’s divine measuring stick and that all of my actions were compared to this standard.

Actually, I hadn’t even performed one action that was acceptable to God my entire life! Not even one! I was shattered, spellbound, speechless, and panic stricken all at the same time. I cried, “I can’t believe it! I’ve wasted my entire life!” I had absolutely nothing to show for my time spent here.

At this point, all that mattered to me was to find pure acts of love to offer to God so that He would accept them. I feverishly searched, but to my dismay, there were none.

God showed me how easy it was to find Him. He gave me a bird’s eye view of my past and I saw all the effort I had exerted in my life toward the attainment of worldly pursuits. I was shown that this whole system of creation was like a rigged roulette wheel in a casino. As much as one tries, one could never be able to fully satisfy one’s selfish desires. It’s virtually impossible because this creation is a rigged game. I swear to you, this is the truth!

11. Close your eyes for a moment, and mentally try to scan through your life. You might even ask God to bring to mind any key things either good or bad. Write down the things that come to mind.

12. In commenting on these two distinct spiritual realities, C.S. Lewis made this comment: “There are two kinds of people in the end; those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell chose it.” What is your reaction to this statement?

End 

The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ’s Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We’d love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org