

Astral Travel & Near-Death Experiences (NDEs)

**Do NDEs prove life after death?
Why am I so skeptical?**

by Clifford Goldstein

Joe had been everywhere from Lapland to the Sea of Japan, but his strangest trip was down the block. Not that anything particularly exciting existed there. Nothing did. But then again it was not *where* he went that was bizarre, but *how*.

A few weeks earlier, when he had been lying on his bed, a strange tingling had begun in his toes. The sensation crawled up his body like a band of bugs until it centered in his head, encapsulating him in a loud, uncomfortable buzz. He felt himself falling through a gray, misty tunnel.

He sat up, mystified. The sensation occurred again and again, and each time he became less fearful and more curious. Next time, instead of fighting it, he would go with the flow.

One afternoon Joe stretched out, closed his eyes, and relaxed when the tingling began. When the buzzing reached his head, he told himself not to be afraid.

Instantly he rocketed through the ceiling and found himself floating in a gray, crackling mist-like static on an empty TV channel. Too scared to even scream, he suddenly snapped out of it and sat up in his room, bug-eyed.

Astral Travel

When Joe asked his friend Fred about the experience, Fred believed he had the answer.

"Astral travel," Fred said. "I've been doing it for years. I've been to Jupiter. I've even talked with my dead grandfather in the astral plane."

The experience enthralled Joe. All his life he'd believed that if something couldn't be put in a test tube, it didn't exist. After those few seconds in the "astral plane," however, he wasn't so sure.

The Austro-German poet Rilke once wrote, "Whoever you are: some evening take a step outside of your home, which you know so well. Enormous space is near." Joe had taken that step. Enormous space was, indeed, near. He wanted to step out farther.

A few days later, however, Joe became a Christian. And, once he'd made that total commitment to Jesus, those experiences in the twilight zone never returned.

He soon learned why. As he studied the Bible, Joe discovered that his "astral plane" wasn't travel at all. He had never left his body, but was duped into thinking he had. Not only did Jesus save him from that deception, however, but through His Word he gave Joe a better understanding of what had happened and why so many people are being deceived.

Near-death experiences

One of the most interesting facets of astral travel is how closely it replicates near-death experiences (NDEs), the stories of those whose vital functions (heartbeat, breathing) stop, yet who, after being revived, give fantastic accounts of what they saw while "dead."

The phenomena that they describe - a buzzing, the sensation of going through a tunnel, the apparent release from the body - are what Joe and others have experienced during astral travel.

"There is a buzz or a ring at death," writes Dr. Raymond Moody, Jr., who has been documenting NDEs since the 1970s, "followed by a rapid progression through an enclosure or tunnel toward light. There is surprise at being outside the body."

Joe knew the feeling, yet he was nowhere near dead!

Apparently, those experiencing astral travel and NDEs experience identical phenomena. And no wonder, for they both spring from the same lies: that we possess immortal souls and that the dead live on.

Immortal Souls

Despite popular theology, the Word of God never teaches that within us is an immortal "soul" - one that can be coughed up at death (NDEs) or in an altered state (astral travel).

Genesis 2:7, for instance, teaches that God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he "became a living soul," this is, a living creature. The breath of life, together with a fleshly body (made from "the dust of the earth"), created a living soul.

In Genesis 2:19, the word for animals or "creature" is the same word translated "soul" in scriptures that refer specifically to people (see Genesis 2:7).

The book of Revelation uses the word *soul* even for the creatures in the sea: "And it [the sea] became as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea" (Revelation 16:3). Souls are what living beings *are* in other words, not what they *possess*.

"Hundreds of outstanding Bible students of all faiths, spread over the centuries," writes church historian Leroy Froom, "attest that there is not a single passage in the Bible in which man, in his earthly life, is spoken of as immortal, either as a whole, or in any part of his being."

Life after death

Linked to the lie of the immortal soul is the lie of "life after life." According to the Scripture, the dead are not floating in some diaphanous mist, but instead are resting in an unconscious sleep until the resurrection.

"For the living know that they shall die," says the bible (Ecclesiastes 9:5), "but the dead know not anything." Psalm 115:17 says, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence."

When Lazarus died, Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may wake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). A few verses later, He said clearly, "Lazarus is dead" (verse 14).

Peter placed righteous King David, not in heaven, but in the grave. "Let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day . . . *for David is not ascended into the heavens*" (Acts 2:29,34).

Though the Bible never teaches an immortal soul, however, it does warn about demonic powers that can deceive mankind with all types of lies.

"That great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

And one of the ways they deceive "the whole world" is with the lie that though the body dies, we live on. That lie was first told to Eve in Eden - "Thou shalt not surely die" - and it has been promoted, in one form or another, ever since.

Widespread belief

That lie is believed by many people. A poll by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Council indicates that 42 percent of Americans say that they have contacted the dead. What's more, belief in an immortal soul and its logical corollary, an immediate afterlife, are the cornerstone of almost all Eastern religions and the New Age movement.

And though Christians scoff at New Age mysticism, those who believe in an immortal soul are open to similar deceptions. Talking about those who have experienced NDEs, for instance, televangelist Pat Robertson writes, in his book, *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*, "Many of them have seen heaven and some have been allowed to see hell. . . .For all of them the experience has been a life-changing one, and this is a uniform testimony to the existence of life after death."

An article in *Christianity Today* (October 7,1988) is more cautious. NDEs it says, "fundamentally 'prove' nothing about life after death." "At best they are partial, ambiguous, fragmented and distorted glimpses of [another world]. . . ."

Supernatural frauds

Are they?

A fundamental teaching of Scripture is that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and that Jesus Christ is our only hope of eternal life (see Acts 4:12). Yet few (if any) of those who've astral

traveled or experienced NDEs come back convicted of their need of Christ.

"Instead," says *Christianity Today*, "they tend to become suspicious of religious 'sectarianism.' . . . The modern visionary's conversion is not to an austere spirituality, but to one that affirms joy and laughter."

Christianity Today comes closest to the truth when it says, "Demonic (or New Age) elements cannot be ruled out." They certainly can't, for they are the only explanation in light of the Bible truth about the nature of man, the state of the dead, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Though certain physiological factors could be involved in astral travel or NDEs, they are fundamentally frauds - supernaturally inspired frauds. They could be hallucinations, or demonic powers could be doing impersonations as well, for the Bible says that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Clearly, when the Bible talks about the supernatural, it's not using poetic figures but warning us of literal powers whose deceptions are so vivid, so convincing and real that, without a proper understanding of the Bible, humans are almost powerless against them.

Back to Joe

After Joe's first time in the astral plane, some Christians warned him that he was dabbling with the devil. So convinced that his experiences were what he thought they were, he laughed in their faces. "Do you believe in Santa Claus as well?"

After his conversion to Christianity, however, and after he understood what had happened, he tried to convince Fred.

"You can't possibly be talking with your grandfather," he said, "because he is asleep."

When Joe explained that supernatural powers were behind these experiences, however, Fred wouldn't listen.

"No," Fred responded, "I know my grandfather."

He's not the only one.

Used by permission of the author. Clifford Goldstein is the author of numerous books and articles. He is a frequent conference and special events speaker. Prior to his conversion to Christianity, his experience with occult phenomena prepared him to write with credibility on the subject of the deceptions of God's enemy and how peoples of the world are impacted by them.