

## DANNION BRINKLEY: A RELUCTANT MESSIAH? ON HIS TRANSFORMATIONAL NDEs

X-FACTOR AND ENCOUNTERS MAGAZINES 2005

Out of all the thousands of people who report having near death experiences, Dannion Brinkley's are probably the most famous.

Having one NDE is usually enough to profoundly change someone's life, but Brinkley had three. The first, which transformed him from US military assassin to spiritual teacher and committed hospice worker, is brilliantly documented in his best-selling book – *Saved By the Light*, which has also been made into a major motion picture.

Brinkley's NDEs went far beyond the usual accounts of floating above the body and moving down a tunnel of light. In the first NDE he experienced a panoramic life review during which he felt all the murderous pain and suffering he had inflicted during the Vietnam War, and other conflicts, from the perspective of his victims. He also described being taken to a 'Crystal City', where he was confronted by beings of light who supposedly gave him a glimpse into the future.

After his first NDE Brinkley claims to have acquired clairvoyant abilities, including the power to read minds and look into the distant past. But for Brinkley such abilities, although useful, were insignificant compared to major insights gleaned from his triple NDEs. "I have been to the other side of the veil," he states. "And I know there is no such thing as death. Therefore, what becomes most important, to all of us, is how passionately and powerfully we live our lives."

### LIVING WITH PASSION

Living passionately and powerfully is certainly what Brinkley has always tried to do. As well as writing two more best selling books: *At Peace in the*

Light and The Secrets of the Light, co written with his wife Kathryn, he also runs several businesses, conducts hundreds of 'Life Readings' for clients over the phone and is the co-founder of The Twilight Brigade, a national non-profit organization of over 5000 volunteers dedicated to being at the bed side of the dying. Brinkley has personally racked up more than 23,000 hours counseling the dying. He is also in huge demand as a public speaker appearing on numerous radio and TV talk shows as well as lecturing all over the US.

It is at one of these lectures in Santa Clara, California that I finally caught up with him.

Brinkley, born and raised in the US South, is an intriguing mix of Evangelical preacher and New Age Messiah. And he sure knows how to keep an audience spellbound. After the lecture he agrees to do an interview with me for a TV documentary I am making about the evidence for life after death.

Brinkley, a huge bear of a man, radiates love and compassion when he hugs and greets people. So, it's quite hard to reconcile this avuncular personality with the young man who joined the Marine Corps because he wanted to kill people. "I used to be a terrible bully," he confides. "Pushy and domineering. I was someone who always tried to get his own way. I was a big kid and I abused that strength. It was hit them first and ask questions later."

Brinkley admits that joining the Marines was the greatest thing that ever happened to him, not because it granted him a license to kill for the US government, but, as he states, "because I got to see just how ugly reality on earth can be before I saw what really is actually like in the spiritual sense."

## LIGHTNING STRIKES

On September 17, 1975, when Brinkley was 25, his life as a killer came to an end. During a violent thunderstorm in Aiken, South Carolina, he was talking on the phone, when lightening struck his house. "I was hit in the head by a bolt of electricity." He recalls. "It felt like a freight train coming into my ear at the speed of light. It went down my spine and welded the nails of

the heels of my shoes to the floor. It threw me in the air, suspended me there and then slammed me back down.”

He was dead for an incredible 28 minutes. After being resuscitated he was completely paralyzed for 6 days and then partially paralyzed for 7 months. It then took him two years to learn to walk and feed himself again. For three years he defied doctor’s predictions that he would never recover.

During those 28 minutes Brinkley had his first NDE. “I’m burning and I’m on fire,” he states, “I lift up out of my body. All of a sudden, I’m free. There’s no pain. I could look, I could see and I could move. Which seemed impossible, because previously I was paralyzed and burning. Then all of a sudden, I found myself engulfed by peace and tranquility.

It was a feeling I have never known before and have not had since. That is the most remarkable point in the whole event. I could look around and I could see everything in the room. Everything that was living had an energy field around it including my wife and the paramedics who came to help me.”

## THE NDE

Brinkley then floated up to the ceiling and found he was looking down at his body thrown across the bed. “My shoes were smoking and the telephone had melted in my hand.” The ambulance arrived and he continued to watch desperate paramedics attempt to resuscitate him on the way to hospital. He then noticed a spot forming over the head of his lifeless body. “A tunnel was forming.” He recalls. “It opened like the eye of a hurricane and moved towards me.” The familiar world disappeared and he found himself moving towards an intensely bright light. “It was the brightest light I have ever seen,” he states. “But strangely it didn’t hurt my eyes, in fact I found it soothing.”

Next Brinkley described seeing a silver form approach him. “As it came close, I felt a deep sense of love that seemed to encompass the entire world. As this being of light came closer the sensation of love became almost too pleasurable to withstand.” Brinkley then described finding himself in what he calls ‘the Crystal City. “You could call it heaven I suppose. Jesus said In my father’s house are many mansions. Well, guess what? It’s true. I think of those as the way stations, before you rejoin the vastness of who you are as a

spiritual being and your connectedness to the divine and what you've chosen as a mission for existence.”

## THE PANORAMIC LIFE REVIEW

In between entering the tunnel and entering ‘The Crystal City’, Brinkley described what he thought was the most important part of the NDE: the panoramic life review. “The being of light engulfed me,” he recalls. “As it did so I began to experience my whole life, in 360 degree holographic sense I felt and saw everything that had ever happened to me. You know how many hairs are in the nose of the doctor that pulls you from your mother. You know every tree, every leaf, and every conversation. You understand not only the language of the person as they express it, but the emotion and the thoughts that they're having. What is so cool is that you are comfortable with it. You're strong, you're brave, courageous and you're facing whatever it is as you watch it. You know you have a certain new identity, as a spiritual being with dignity, direction and purpose, facing who you are and the distance that you traveled in the life you just had. You see your whole life pass before you. Then you watch it from a second person point of view, just like we engage our friends, just like we look at our children, our parents. We watch the good and the bad and we observe it with an opinion or a perspective based on that we love them and you watch yourself and then you literally become every person that you ever encounter. And you feel the direct results of your interaction between you and every person. That's what changed my life. That was the end of that old person. That was it, I was never the same again.”

A particularly vivid part of the life review involved Brinkley feeling the sense of bewilderment and pain experienced by one of the Vietcong officers at the moment Brinkley blew his head off. Not only could he feel this man's suffering at and beyond the point of his death but he then had to experienced the agony felt by his wife and family when they were told he had been killed.

Once Brinkley had finished his life review, unsurprisingly, he felt a deep sense of shame and guilt. “I knew I had lived a totally selfish life, rarely reaching out to help anyone,” he admits. As he stood in front of the being of light Brinkley expected some form of cosmic admonishment for the terrible

actions he had committed. Instead, he felt a deep sense of nonjudgmental compassion. Then Brinkley claims that the being communicated telepathically to him saying: “Who you are is the difference that God makes. And that difference is love.”

Although Brinkley found much in the life review grueling and painful – something he states he will never get over, he also realized what an extraordinary gift it was. “For me, I had a chance to come back and change. For most, that will never happen. So, I like to warn the military: pay close attention to the reasons you're going to war. But pay even closer attention to the motives of the politicians who send you, because if why you are sent is based on a lie, no matter how great and honorable you are, you will sense this and suffer for it in the life review.”

## VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Following the life review Brinkley said he was transported into what he called the ‘Crystal City’. “I was awestruck,” he states. “This place seemed to resonate with power. I knew it was a place of learning and I had been taken there for instruction.” Next Brinkley saw thirteen beings of light appear before him. Each one he described as representing a different emotional and psychological characteristic that all humans possess. “Each emanated these emotions in such a way as I could feel them.”

Next Brinkley describes almost ducking as small boxes emerged from the chests of these beings and one by one zoomed up to just in front of his face. Each opened revealing a television-sized picture, which Brinkley was told was an event in the world that was yet to happen. This was the culmination of his NDE and after this glimpse into the future Brinkley snapped back into his traumatized body.

Shortly after his NDE in 1975 Brinkley shared these prophetic visions with the father of NDE research: Raymond Moody. Out of the eight prophesies some were vague and some extremely specific. In one vision he was shown that an actor would become president of the US and that this person’s initials were R.R. Brinkley mistakenly thought these initials might refer to Robert Redford. But they were, of course, those of Ronald Reagan.

Another vision informed Brinkley that in 1986 a nuclear explosion would occur in a cement structure next to a river in Russia. Hundreds would die. This disaster, he was shown, had something to do with the word Wormwood.

This prophecy also proved to be extremely accurate. In 1986 the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl blew up contaminating hundreds of thousands of people. The Russian word Chernobyl literally means Wormwood.

Other visions correctly pointed to the collapse of Communism, the war with Iraq in 1990, and the technological break though recently announced by two Israeli scientists who had succeeded in combing strands of DNA with a working electronic component.

Brinkley claims that every person has chosen to incarnate for a specific purpose and that part of the aim of our lives is to discover and then act on that purpose. “So, when you finish that job, you rejoice in getting back to the spiritual world. But what you will miss more than anything else is touch. There is no touching in the spiritual world. There is no place to hold someone and be separate from them. Over there, three hundred thousand people can merge into one consciousness, everybody can talk at the same time and everybody understand everything everybody's saying. It's a merging together of knowledge. Over here, you get to be separate, you get to push away or hug, but you do get to touch the world and that's quite a gift.”

## SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY MEET

As the interview comes to a close, I ask Brinkley what he thinks the greatest impact of his NDEs has been? “I think it is to know that material reality, as we know it, doesn't really exist. For me the NDE is where science and spirituality meet. It gives us a better understanding of who we are and what our potential is and a medium by which to explore it. *It made me realize that we are great, powerful and mighty spiritual beings. And that we have dignity, direction and purpose and that we are far greater than we can ever imagine ourselves to be.* In other words,

we are divine beings connected to the universe. We're not poor, pitiful, stupid little humans trying to have a spiritual experience. We're great, powerful and mighty spiritual beings having a human experience. So, we had better pay attention to it because so far we're just not very good at it.”

