

119

MINISTRIES

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Life After Death Series: Part 3 – What is Death? (Continued)

119 Ministries would like to thank all those who directly and indirectly provided research, content, and feedback leading to the creation of this teaching series.

In part three of the life after death series, we will continue with defining the nature of death.

As we covered in part two, we learn that we return to dust. Dust is not conscious.

That is why unbelievers need a resurrection to face judgment. If we were conscious at death, then a resurrection would not be necessary for unbelievers just to face judgment.

Think about that for a moment, because it is important.

Why does everyone need a resurrection of a new body, believers and unbelievers, if consciousness can exist outside of a body?

If we could exist as our own spirit outside of a body, then no one would need a resurrection for eternal life to save us from death.

We would not need a resurrection for eternal rewards.

Unbelievers would not need a resurrection just to be told their judgment.

We would not see verses like this:

Isaiah 26:19

*Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.*

At death, the spirit leaves and we become dust. And it is not until we “awake” that we are once again conscious or aware. It is at the resurrection of the faithful that we sing for joy, we are once again conscious and alive.

James 2:26

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

James likely pulls this idea in part from Job 34.

Job 34:14-15

If he [[YHWH] should set his heart to it
and gather to **himself his [YHWH's] spirit and his breath,**
all flesh would perish together,
and **man would return to dust.**

Without YHWH's spirit that animates us, we are dead, and return to dust. Scripture constantly reminds us that we return to dust, as though returning to dust is the problem, and the resurrection is the solution.

Of course, turning to dust is not a problem if the theory of the faithful being a ghost-like spirit in Heaven is accurate. Nor is turning to dust even remotely an unbeliever's problem as compared to being tormented forever in a spirit in something called Hell.

More on all of that later. At the moment, we are simply highlighting Scripture's emphasis of us turning to dust as the problem of death, and the resurrection as the solution, and noting Scripture's absence of any temporary existence as a conscious spirit between death and the resurrection.

Job 21:26

They lie down alike **in the dust,** and the worms cover them.

Psalms 22:15

my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me **in the dust of death.**

Psalms 90:3

You **return man to dust** and say, "**Return, O children of man!**"

To return to something, means we become what we were once before. Before we were created, as man, we were dust. We were not a conscious spirit floating around. It takes YHWH's command of "**Return, O children of man**" to resurrect us back unto conscious life.

Psalms 103:14

For he knows our frame; **he remembers that we are dust.**

We are dust, and YHWH remembers that. For what purpose? For the purpose of the promised resurrection. We are not a conscious spirit waiting for resurrection, but simply non-living dust, waiting for a resurrection back to life.

Psalms 104:29

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath [*neshema*], they **die and return to their dust.**

What do we become? We return to dust. The pattern over and over is that we become nothing more than dust. We see no indication that our body becomes dust, and we also become a conscious spirit. The

Biblical problem presented to us repeatedly is that we are dust, and consequently in need of a resurrection. The problem is not that we are spirit-like ghosts and need a body.

Ecclesiastes 3:20

All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

WHAT IS SHEOL?

Now, doesn't Scripture say that we will all go down to Sheol? Isn't Sheol something beyond just dust?

Actually, no. Sheol is actually just another metaphor for us becoming dust. It is nothing uniquely special, nor contradicts anything else Scripture declares we become at death.

Job 17:16

Will it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together into the dust?"

Sheol is simply the Hebrew word for grave. What happens in a grave? You become dust.

Easy to understand, isn't it? It's not complicated. It's actually rather simple.

Sheol is us being placed into the earth, and then us becoming earth. Descending into Sheol simply means one has died. It is a Hebraic idiom, not much different than some English idioms for death.

- "He kicked the bucket." Did he literally kick the bucket?
- "He bought the farm." Did he literally buy the farm?
- "He bit the dust." Did he really bite the dust?

Job 17:16

Will it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together into the dust?"

"Descending into Sheol" or *"going to the grave"* simply means one has returned to what he was before—dust. The bars of Sheol metaphorically indicates that death is a prison. Death is a permanent state outside of a future resurrection that saves us. Death has a hold on us until we are released by a resurrection unto life.

We will find that many of the verses that describe what happens after death are using metaphors or Hebrew poetic language. We mention that because some might suggest that because it's poetic language that we should not take it seriously or literally. However, that is the nature of Biblical language. Metaphors, idioms, and poetic language are intended to be interpreted, and then the interpretation is to be taken literally.

See Isaiah 26:16-21 for example. These verses are clearly talking about the resurrection in Hebraic poetic and metaphorical language. Yet, when the poetic and metaphorical language is interpreted, it all agrees with the rest of Scripture on the literal nature and timing of the resurrection.

So, while it is important to understand that all poetic language regarding what happens after death is in agreement with related Scripture, there is something else to consider that is equally important.

There exists no poetic language in which we are to be conscious spirits existing in Heaven before or after the resurrection. All related poetic language describes death to be an unconscious state. This unconscious state exists for believers until we enter eternal life through the resurrection. The same is true for unbelievers, but with a different ending. Those that are unbelievers are unconscious until they are resurrected to face judgment leading to eternal death.

Now that we have discussed the patterns and consistency of the nature of Biblical metaphors, idioms, and poetic language as it relates to the nature of life after death, we can continue on...

THE SILENCE OF DEATH

The author of Psalms 30 states that if he dies, goes to the pit, and becomes dust, that he can no longer praise YHWH.

So *Sheol* is also called the pit.

Does that mean that the pit is the place that we go when we die, and there we are a conscious spirit?

No.

Dust is dead. Dust is not alive. Dust is not conscious. Dust has no thoughts. Dust cannot praise YHWH.

Psalm 30:9

“What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit (*sachat*)? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?”

If you died and become a conscious spirit, would you praise YHWH? Would you praise God?

Yes, of course, we would all praise God in death. Absolutely!

So, the only reason we would not be praising YHWH in death is that we can't. Do you follow?

If you were a conscious spirit at death, you would be praising YHWH. But David states that if he died, he could not praise YHWH!

Dust cannot think. Dust cannot praise. Dust cannot do anything. Why would we expect dust to praise anything or anyone?

Here, the pit is equated to death. The pit is also equated to us becoming dust.

This becomes interesting. The English word for pit actually hides the metaphorical understanding that is present when we examine the Hebrew. The Hebrew word for pit is *sachat*.

It actually comes from the meaning of *to destroy, corrupt, or bring to ruin*. (Kohlenberger/Mounce Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary)

Going to the pit means we are destroyed. We are dead. We are dust. We are no more. Ruined.

Destroyed. Dust. Nothingness. No more. Nada. Zilch. ...also known as...the reason we need a resurrection.

In the beginning, the adversary convinced man that we would not really die:

Genesis 3:4

But the serpent said to the woman, **“You will not surely die.”**

But the serpent lied. We do die. We do not live on in a new form as a spirit when we are dust.

The idea that the dead don't really die but instead remain conscious after death in either Heaven or Hell, is one of the most common beliefs today, and the serpent, in effect, said it first.

We do die, and that was one of the first things YHWH clarified to counter the lie of the serpent, by declaring that we now return to dust at death. Sadly, the Serpent's lie lives on...

Job has quite a lot to say about death, and the nature of it. After Job experienced some substantial mental and physical trials and losses, he cursed the day of his birth and wished that he had died at birth.

Here is what he says about the dead, a group he sadly, at one point, desired to be among:

Job 3:11-19

“Why did I not die at birth,
come out from the womb and expire?
Why did the knees receive me?
Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?
For then I would have lain down and **been quiet**;
I would **have slept**; then I would have **been at rest**,
with kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuilt ruins for themselves,
or with princes who had gold,
who filled their houses with silver.
Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child,
as infants who never see the light?
There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.
There the prisoners are at ease together;
they hear not the voice of the taskmaster.
The small and the great are there,
and the slave is free from his master.

Job tells us quite distinctly about the status of the dead.

But Job says the wicked cannot trouble us at death because we are at rest. This is not understood out of context. In fact, it is the context that makes it all the more clear.

He also informs us that the dead are asleep, a condition death is compared to numerous times in the Scriptures.

Job further discloses to us that ALL the dead, both distinguished and insignificant, the small and the great, are in this state.

Later on Job, mentions how he expects to lie in the earth at his death.

Job 7:21

Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now **I shall lie in the earth;**
you will seek me, but I shall not be.”

Job continues on later with his contemplations on death, but he adds a significant detail:

Job 14:10-14

But a man dies and is laid low;
man breathes his last, and where is he?
As waters fail from a lake
and a river wastes away and dries up,
so a man lies down and rises not again;
**till the heavens are no more he will not awake
or be roused out of his sleep.**
Oh that you would hide me in Sheol,
that **you would conceal me until your wrath be past,**
that you would **appoint me a set time, and remember me!**
If a man dies, shall he live again?
**All the days of my service I would wait,
till my renewal should come.**

Here we see that Job had some knowledge of the resurrection. When we are dead, we are not alive. We are not a conscious spirit. So Job asks, “shall we live again?” This is not a question you ask nor care about if you are a happy conscious spirit already living in Heaven. Think about that.

So, will we live again?

The answer is yes, at a set time, when YHWH remembers us, we are then renewed, we are then resurrected. Job mentions this, and clearly defines the resurrection as the means to no longer being dead. The resurrection animates us back to a conscious state, out of rest or non-existence, and back to the living.

How many know that the word *rest* in Hebrew, at its core, means to *cease* or *desist*. For example, on the Sabbath, we are to rest. We cease or desist work.

When we die, we simply cease everything. There is no activity. That is quite profound when you think about it. Death as rest is the definition that is right before us, meaning to cease. That is the opposite of being an active conscious spirit somewhere following death.

In rest, we cease everything until the resurrection.

A little further on, Job speaks of the resurrection in more detail:

Job 19:25-27

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
**And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!**

Job knew that even after his body decayed in the grave, he would eventually see God in his flesh, with his very own eyes.

So, when do we see God? Is it after we die and we see God as a spirit, and then we are later resurrected?

No. Job does not state that he becomes a conscious spirit and that he gets to see God. He does not mention anything happening when we are dead, let alone actually seeing God. Job does not state he will see God in Heaven. Job states that he will see God when he is resurrected. Big difference. Profound difference.

Job states that we will first see God when we are resurrected, and we will need a resurrected body. It is at that moment, in his flesh, that his heart faints within him. He looks forward to the resurrection, because at the resurrection, he will finally see God. We are no different than Job. We will also have to wait 'til the resurrection.

He knew of the resurrection of the dead and was anxiously looking forward to it. Why? Because he understood that the resurrection was mankind's only hope of overcoming and defeating death. If there were no resurrection, the dead would continue to sleep in their graves forever, unconscious and unaware.

King Solomon shared the same understanding that Job had regarding the fate of those who were dead.

Solomon, stated to be the wisest man in the world (I Kings 4:29-31), clearly understood the ultimate finality of death. Solomon also mentions that both the righteous and the wicked experience the very same scenario when dead, which of course, as already noted, is absolute nothingness.

Ecclesiastes 9:2-5

It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

The meaning of these words of Solomon are rather obvious, if taken at face value and in context.

The same fate happens to all at death. We go to Sheol, the grave. At that time, we will know nothing.

We have no reward. If we went to Heaven, would that not be a reward? But Solomon says there is no reward for us while we are dead.

We will not work. We will have no knowledge. We will have no wisdom. We will not even experience the smallest fleeting thought. This, of course, agrees with Job's description of the nature of death.

This is why we have the hope of a resurrection. The resurrection IS our reward. Eternal death is final meaning as eternal non-existence without any possibility of a resurrection.

Unfortunately, those who believe and teach that immortal spirits consciously continue on after death do not accept these clear comments written by Solomon.

The weight of numerous other plain Scriptures support Solomon's words about the state of the dead. Let's look at some passages from the book of Psalms to see if Job and Solomon were speaking contrary to the Scriptures regarding death and the state of the dead:

Psalm 6:5

**For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who will give you praise?**

In Psalm 6, David makes the clear statement that no one remembers God when they are dead. He again mentions that no one is praising God when they are dead. It does not matter if you were a believer or an unbeliever. When you die, you will not remember God. When you die, you will not be praising God. You cease. You stop.

How many have heard it said and believe that when we die we immediately become a spirit praising God, and that is when eternity begins?

But David makes it clear in Psalm 6 that in death no one is or has ever praised God, or even remembered him.

Can you imagine any believer that has died and became some conscious spirit form never ever praising God?

Can you imagine any possibility that if we are conscious after death that we would not remember God at all?

Of course not. The only reason we would not remember God or be praising God is because we can't. We are not conscious. We are not self-aware. We are asleep. We are nothing more than dust. When you die, you will not be praising God. You will praise God when you are resurrected, and like Job, finally see Him with your own eyes.

David compares death to sleep in Psalm 13.

Psalm 13:3

**Consider and answer me, O Lord [YHWH] my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,**

In Psalm 17, David speaks of awaking from death at the resurrection. This parallels Job's comments about the resurrection (Job 19:26-27).

Psalm 17:15

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

So, we do not awake unto the likeness of God until the resurrection. We are asleep until the resurrection. We are not conscious until the resurrection.

Psalm 30:2-4

O Lord [YHWH] my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have **healed me.**
O Lord [YHWH], you have **brought up my soul from Sheol;**
you **restored me to life** from among those who go down to the pit.
Sing praises to the Lord [YHWH], O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.

In this song for the dedication of the house of David, the psalmist gives God thanks for restoring his life.

Praising God following death is not happening until we are restored back to life through the resurrection.

So, the only way out of this prison of Sheol is through the resurrection. This means that all dead are still in Sheol, the pit, the grave, as dust, until the still future resurrection occurs.

The questions he asks in verse 9 emphasizes that if he were dead, he would not be able to praise God for His works and declare His truth.

Psalm 30:9-10

“What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O Lord [YHWH], and be merciful to me!
O Lord [YHWH], be my helper!”

Why would he not be praising God in his death? Because he is only dust at this point.

In Psalm 88, Heman the Ezrahite speaks of the affliction he has suffered. He pleads with God to save him before he dies, because he knows that if he doesn't, he has no hope. His rhetorical questions (verses 10-12) are designed to rouse God to action before he dies and all hope is lost.

Psalm 88:1-12

O Lord [YHWH], God of my salvation,
I cry out day and night before you.
Let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry!

For my soul is full of troubles,
and **my life draws near to Sheol.**
I am counted among those **who go down to the pit;**
I am a man who has no strength,
like one set loose among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.
You have put me in the **depths of the pit,**
in the regions dark and deep.
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and you overwhelm me with all your waves.

You have caused my companions to shun me;
you have made me a horror to them.
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
my eye grows dim through sorrow.
Every day I call upon you, O Lord [YHWH];
I spread out my hands to you.
Do you work wonders for the dead?
Do the departed rise up to praise you?
Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
Are your wonders known in the darkness,
or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

There is an answer to this question.

The psalmist in Psalm 115 flatly states that the dead do not praise God. "Silence" here is used to describe the grave, just as it also does in Psalm 115:17.

Psalm 115:17

The **dead do not praise** the Lord [YHWH],
nor do any who **go down into silence** (*dumah*).

The Hebrew word *dumah*, translated as silence, literally means silence. When we are dead, we not only do not praise YHWH, there is nothing going on at all.

If we are only dust, that should not really surprise us. However, it is not really compatible with the idea of us becoming a conscious spirit.

On the contrary, our thoughts perish on the day that we die.

Psalm 146:3-4

Do not trust in princes,
In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.
His **spirit departs, he returns to the earth;**
In that very day **his thoughts perish.**

Becoming dust equals no more thoughts. That should not surprise us. Why would dust have thoughts?

As we have just seen, the Psalms are full of insight into the state of the dead. In every case, the dead are portrayed as being unconscious in the grave and unable to do anything. There is no thinking, no feeling, no praising, no awareness, no anything.

Over and over again, we see the same pattern consistently of this in Scripture.

The metaphor of being asleep also makes sense. Death is viewed as temporary. All will go through a resurrection, both the faithful, and unbelievers as well. We will awake (Daniel 12:2)! In this way, death for all is similar to sleep. Eventually, we will all wake up.

Of course, the results of the resurrection plays out very differently for both groups. More on that later. For the moment, we want to highlight the metaphor of death as sleep, which fits the idea of us becoming temporarily unconscious as dust quite well.

DEATH AS SLEEP

The language used to describe the death of David also supports the view that the dead are asleep and at rest in their graves:

1 Kings 2:10

Then David **slept with his fathers** and was buried in the city of David.

The apostles Peter and Paul confirm this understanding in the book of Acts, going so far as to say that David did not go to heaven when he died:

Acts 2:29; 34

(29) “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ... (34) For **David did not ascend into the heavens...**

“David did not ascend into the heavens”...and if it matters, this is after Yeshua’s resurrection.

Acts 13:36

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, **fell asleep** and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,

The phrase "slept with his fathers" is used at least 36 times in the TANAKH to describe the death of kings of Israel and Judah. It is applied to both the good kings and the wicked kings alike. There is no differentiation between the fate of the kings, whether good or evil. All are said to be sleeping with their forefathers in death.

It is interesting how translators chose to use “corruption” as an English translation of the Greek word that was primarily used in the Septuagint for grave and the pit, or *sheol* and *sachat* respectively. Both of these words better carry a sense of destruction, which is the Hebraic description of death. Death is a destruction of life, you cease.

The New Testament speaks of death as sleep many times also:

John 11:11

After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen **asleep**, but I go to **awaken** him.”

Acts 7:60

And falling (Stephen) cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, **he fell asleep**.

1 Corinthians 15:6

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have **fallen asleep**.

The angel who revealed end-time events to Daniel (Daniel 10-12) confirms the Scriptural understanding of the status of the dead with his words to him regarding his fate:

Daniel 12:13

But go your way till the end. And you **shall rest** and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

Daniel is told by the angel that he will rest in death until the time of the end, and then he will arise in the resurrection to claim his inheritance. Resting and being asleep does not fit well in the framework of being a conscious spirit. We are asleep and unconscious until the resurrection.

THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

This awakening from the sleep of death at the resurrection is spoken of many times in the Bible:

Daniel 12:2

And many of **those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake**, some **to everlasting life**, and **some to shame and everlasting contempt**.

When does eternal life begin? Does it begin when you die and you become a separate spirit consciousness in Heaven or Hell?

No.

We have the promise of eternal life when we enter into and live out the faith; eternal life actually begins when the faithful are no longer dead but resurrected back unto life. Likewise, the unbeliever is also resurrected, but for a different purpose.

When the unbelievers are resurrected, they are resurrected to face judgement, all at the same time. They have been unconscious and unaware of anything since their death. They will feel immense shame at their judgment.

Daniel 12:2

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

So, everlasting life begins when? Everlasting life begins at the resurrection!

What about this everlasting contempt? Does this mean that unbelievers will be resurrected and live eternally in resurrected bodies in contempt?

No, of course not. Eternal life is not promised to unbelievers. They are promised eternal death.

The Hebrew word for “contempt” is “*darone*.” It is very important to note that the only other time it is used in all of the TANAKH (The Old Testament) is in Isaiah 66:24, and it is used in a similar way and in similar context.

Isaiah 66:24

“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an **abhorrence** (*darone*) to all flesh.”

In Isaiah 66:24, those who have “*darone*” (“contempt” or “disgust”) are the believers who go out and look upon the dead bodies (not living souls)

Having everlasting contempt would be similar to us remembering Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin.

We will always have contempt or disgust for people like them. Even into eternity.

Isaiah 66:24 and Daniel 12:2 are inextricably linked by the same Hebrew word and that Hebrew word speaks of our eternal contempt for the wicked, not for the wicked’s eternal conscious torment.

There are two emotions here, shame and contempt.

It is obvious that the unsaved have the shame emotion, as an immediate consequence to their resurrection and judgment. And it is the righteous that have the contempt emotion towards the wicked.

Notice that only one of those emotions lasts forever. It is contempt, which proves that we (as believers) will live forever and still feel emotion.

However, nothing is said about shame being felt forever.

Why? Because the wicked will be destroyed in body and soul. (Matthew 10:28). The wicked will experience the second death. They are only resurrected in order to face judgment, and then to die again. Their shame is not felt eternally because you cannot feel shame when you are dead. You do not feel anything as dust. You cease in everything. Now you know the reason why the shame is temporary, but the contempt is forever.

We will cover more regarding the timeline and process leading to the final fate of unbelievers later, as that was simply a necessary overview as it was an element of Daniel 12. But for now, let’s continue on with verses highlighting our resurrection from our status of death as dust.

Isaiah 26:19

Your **dead shall live**; their **bodies shall rise**.
You who **dwell in the dust**, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead.

So, at the resurrection, our status is unconscious dust. We are dead. We dwell in the dust. We do not dwell as a conscious spirit. We are not singing for joy in Heaven as a ghost-like spirit, we do not sing for joy until the resurrection.

John 5:28

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when **all who are in the tombs will hear his voice**

Ephesians 5:13 -14

But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, Therefore it says,

“**Awake, O sleeper,**
and **arise from the dead,**
and Christ will shine on you.”

As we have seen over and over, the Bible speaks of death as a condition of unconsciousness similar to sleep.

Many quote Paul's writings (Philippians 1:20-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9) to supposedly disprove our "sleeping" status in death and we will examine those in the next part of this teaching series.

However, it is actually from Paul that we receive the most emphatic declaration of the resurrection from the dead as the only hope for those who have died.

Let's examine Paul's comments about the resurrection from the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians in detail:

1 Corinthians 15:12

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Here Paul begins to dispute a teaching brought to Corinth that denied the bodily resurrection of the dead.

This false teaching likely took root among the Corinthian church due to the strong cultural influence exerted by the dualistic Greek view of human nature and gnostic influence that taught that anything physical was evil.

The first century Greeks had a view that the conscious spirit lives on as a separate ghostly version of us after the body dies. This perspective has influenced Christian doctrine since at least the 1st century, and it even influenced some Jewish sects, such as the Sadducees during and before the 1st century. We see the impact of this influence even to this day.

This unbiblical view apparently had caused some Corinthian believers to falsely conclude that a resurrection from the dead was not necessary, since the spirits of departed believers were already with Christ in Heaven. That makes sense. If you are a conscious spirit living in Heaven, then needs a body?

Who then needs a resurrection? We have also made that point several times already.

Consequently, influenced by the Greeks, the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, because they believed in the idea of the dead becoming conscious spirits.

However, Paul, coming from a Pharisaic Jewish background (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Philippians 3:5), viewed the nature of death in a completely different way. The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPHL) has this to say about Paul's beliefs regarding the resurrection:

Paul's teaching about the bodily resurrection arises out of a Jewish anthropology in which the "soul" (Heb nephesh, Gk psyche) is the animating principle of human life. In mainstream Jewish thought human beings do not have souls, they are souls... Given this background it is perfectly understandable how in Romans 8:23 Paul describes the effects of the resurrection in terms of the ultimate "redemption of our bodies"... (p. 810)

As a side note, the Greek word *egeertai* ("raised") found in verse 12 is a form of the Greek verb *egeiro*. The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament states: "*The basic meaning of egeiro is (trans.) to wake from sleep...or (intrans.) awaken, rise... (p. 372, vol. 1).* Literally, Paul's comment could be translated: "He has been awakened from the dead..."

1 Corinthians 15:13-15

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

Paul addresses the very heart of this false doctrine in verse 13. He firmly links the future resurrection of the dead with the past resurrection of the Messiah.

If the dead aren't going to be awakened from their sleep at the resurrection, then Paul says that neither has Christ been awakened from death. And if Christ has not been awakened from death, then their hope is futile and meaningless. Additionally, that would mean that Paul and the other apostles would have been spreading a false message!

1 Corinthians 15:16-17

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

For emphasis, Paul again states in verse 16 that if the dead are not going to wake up from the sleep of death in the future, then Christ has not already been awakened.

If this is the case, Paul tells them that their faith is useless and there has been no forgiveness for their sins. Everything depends on a resurrection to save us from death. Everything! If there is no resurrection, then there is only eternal death, we would never live again.

1 Corinthians 15:18-19

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ **have perished**. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Now Paul takes his case a step further. If there is no resurrection, then those believers who have died while believing in Christ have ceased to exist, eternally perished.

Perish - ἀπόλλομαι: to destroy utterly; to kill, to bring to nought, make void, to lose, to be destroyed, perish,

-Mounce Greek Dictionary

There is no ambiguity in Paul's argument. He clearly states that the only hope for life after death is in our resurrection, made possible with the Messiah's resurrection. Without our future resurrection following death, we are perished, utterly destroyed, made void. Game over...nothingness forever.

Paul's position here totally negates the Hellenistic belief that at death we become conscious spirits in Heaven with the Messiah. If at death we are in Heaven with the Messiah, then there is no need for a resurrection that is supposedly our only hope. We don't need a hope for anything, even a resurrection, if at death we are in Heaven with our Messiah Yeshua. What more hope would we need to look forward to if at death we would already be in Heaven with our Messiah?

1 Corinthians 15:20-25

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the **resurrection of the dead**. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

After laying out the ultimate consequences of the rejection of the resurrection on their theology, Paul goes on to state the facts to the Corinthians.

Yeshua had indeed been awakened from the sleep of the dead. When God raised him from the sleep of death to glorious eternal life, our Messiah became the firstfruits of all those who will be awakened from death at a later time.

Since death originally entered the human race because of Adam's sin, the resurrection of the dead to immortality came by way of a man's perfect obedience.

But there is to be an order to the resurrection to immortality: Yeshua the Messiah first, then those messianic believers at the coming of Yeshua. More detail than this we are not really given, but Paul does tell us the end result; Messiah will reign until the last enemy, death, is destroyed.

Paul sums up his dissertation on death and the resurrection toward the end of chapter 15:

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

I tell you this, brothers: **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and **this mortal body must put on immortality**. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, **then** shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Paul begins here with a statement that is often overlooked; flesh and blood mortals cannot INHERIT the Kingdom of God.

As numerous other Scriptures show, however, they will be in the Kingdom of God.

He goes on to say that not all believers will die before Messiah Yeshua returns. But when he returns, all believers will be changed instantly at the sounding of the last trumpet. At the sounding of this trumpet, the dead saints will awake from their sleep in new, immortal and imperishable bodies. This is the resurrection.

We will go from having an Earthly body to having a Heavenly body:

1 Corinthians 15:40

There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.

Don't allow the term heavenly bodies to confuse you. These heavenly bodies are not like ghosts.

They will be physical bodies, just like Yeshua's physical resurrected body that could be touched and felt, that could interact with our world. Yeshua's resurrected body is considered to be a resurrected heavenly body.

After the resurrection Yeshua revealed the similarities:

Luke 24:39

See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

The raised heavenly body will be perfect, incorruptible, imperishable, and immortal. Paul's usage of "heavenly body" conveys a difference with our current bodies that are corruptible, eventually reduced to dust. These are the bodies that will also have the perfect new Spirit from YHWH that we covered earlier in the teaching series.

It is at the resurrections that death is conquered, as Paul said, "death is swallowed up in victory."

So, for us, death is not conquered until the resurrection! It is conquered in promise through the resurrection of Yeshua, but not yet actualized in us. Why? As we covered earlier, the resurrection protects us from the second death that unbelievers will face.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! **Over such the second death has no power**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

That is so important to understand. If there is one thing we hope becomes clear, it is that without the resurrection, we have no hope at all of escaping the finality and nothingness of death. It is the

resurrection, and the resurrection alone, that conquers death. Without the resurrection, life is not possible.

However, death will still exist for unbelievers, following the second resurrection.

Revelation 21:8

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, **which is the second death.**”

The second death is by fire:

Revelation 20:14

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

The second death is the final occurrence of death.

Our spiritual body resurrection unto life protects us from the second death.

Paul spoke of this same event in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about **those who are asleep**, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

In verse 13 he defines for the church at Thessalonica why he is writing; to give them comfort and hope regarding the fate of those believers who had died (or "fallen asleep").

1 Thessalonians 4:14

For since we believe that Jesus (Yeshua) died and rose again, even so, through Jesus (Yeshua), God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Verse 14 is an affirmation of faith in the resurrection. Paul says that just as we believe God raised Yeshua from the dead, so also, we believe that God will resurrect those who died believing in Christ at his return.

There are those who say this verse teaches that Yeshua will bring the conscious spirits of the dead believers with him from heaven to be reunited with their resurrected bodies at his coming.

However, this interpretation of verse 14 totally misses the point of what Paul is saying. That is not what it says.

If that understanding of the state of the dead was to be the Thessalonians' consolation and hope, Paul would have had no need to address the resurrection at all. He simply could have stated that the spirits of the dead believers were at that time conscious and alive with our Messiah in Heaven.

What more consolation would they have needed regarding the fate of their dead brothers and sisters? Everything would be just fine. That would be a relieving message for the Thessalonians to hear. That

would be the solution that would bring them comfort and quell their anxiety. All is good.

But that is not at all the message Paul presents, and for good reason. The hope for the dead, and only hope for the dead, as Paul presents it to the Thessalonians, is the resurrection of Messiah, enabling our future resurrection.

Just as he told the Corinthians, Paul emphasizes that Yeshua's resurrection is the guarantee of the future resurrection of those “sleeping,” who will awake at the time of his return. It is the resurrection that is the solution. And when Yeshua returns He will bring on the resurrection, and praise Yah for that day!

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left **until the coming of the Lord**, will not precede those **who have fallen asleep**. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Paul's consolation to the Thessalonians is the expectation that they will be reunited with their sleeping brethren at the resurrection of the dead. The sleeping dead will be resurrected first, brought into the air with Messiah Yeshua, and then the faithful that are alive during this time, will also be changed and brought up to meet the resurrected dead. YHWH will bring and give us back our thoughts, emotions, etc...our new heart and new spirit when we are resurrected, but such will be cleansed and pure...free from the virus of sin.

This resurrection will occur when Yeshua comes down from Heaven as the last trumpet is blown.

It is very important to understand what Paul just said as the solution to the Thessalonians' concern. The Thessalonians' wanted to know when they would see their lost loved ones again. What are we told by Paul? We are not told that we will be reunited with believers in Heaven at death. We are told that we are reunited at the resurrection. Many miss that profound distinction.

The dead will rise from their graves first (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18), and together with them those believers who remain alive will be changed into their Heavenly bodies and will ascend to meet Yeshua in the air (Matthew 24:31). Paul is telling the Thessalonians to have hope in the resurrection as the solution to death and to seeing their loved ones again, not to have hope in being a disembodied, conscious spirit in heaven.

Paul tells the Thessalonians to relax regarding their concern of their dead loved ones. He addresses their concern, not by saying, don't worry, you will see them again in Heaven as a spirit ghost-like being. No...he addresses their concern very clearly...they will see their loved ones on resurrection day, at the return of Yeshua. That is a rather important clarification for those who believe that we will see our loved ones in Heaven someday as a floating conscious spirit.

Ezekiel 37 also details the coming resurrection.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord [YHWH] was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord [YHWH] and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me

around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord [YHWH] God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord [YHWH]. Thus says the Lord [YHWH] God to these bones: **Behold, will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live,** and you shall know that I am the Lord [YHWH].”

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord [YHWH] God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” **So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.**

Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord [YHWH] God: **Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord [YHWH], when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.** Then you shall know that I am the Lord [YHWH]; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord [YHWH].”

When the resurrection takes place, we will be brought into the land of Israel, where Yeshua will reign for 1,000 years. More on that later.

This concludes part 3 of the Life After Death Series. In this part of the Life After Death series the following should now be better understood:

- Death is a returning to dust. We are not conscious while we are dead.
- Some Hebraic metaphors for this are Sheol, silence, and sleep, which help illustrate the non-conscious attributes of death.
- Our only hope and escape from death is the coming resurrection unto life, which is a returning of our consciousness to a new Heavenly, yet physical body.

In part 4 of the Life After Death Series, we will examine the Scriptures used by those who believe that conscious spirits live on after death. In other words, we will answer some criticisms or objections to our presented conclusions.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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