

MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD

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“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

ABOUT EACH CHAPTER

#1: “The Right to the Tree of Life” - In this penetrating study, Pastor Bohr examines the Tree of Life passages from Genesis to Revelation. In the process he shows that man’s life at the beginning and in the new earth was/will be contingent upon continual partaking from the Tree of Life. You will learn many new concepts from this lecture.

#2: “Rachel’s Departing Soul” - Did Rachel have an immortal soul that departed her body the moment she died (Genesis 35:18)? This lecture offers a comprehensive study of the words “body”, “soul,” and “spirit” in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

#3: “A Thief and a Witch” - Did the penitent thief really to go Paradise with Jesus on Good Friday? Did Saul speak to the departed soul of Samuel when he went to visit the Witch of Endor? This lecture presents compelling reasons why the thief did not go to Paradise and Saul did not speak with the departed spirit of Samuel.

#4: “Absent from the Body and Present with the Lord” - What did the apostle Paul mean when he expressed his desire to be absent from the body and present with the Lord? Did he want this to take place the moment he died or at

the resurrection? A careful analysis of this misunderstood passage in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

#5: “Paul’s Dilemma: Stay or Depart?” - Did the apostle Paul believe that he would go to heaven immediately upon the moment of his death? In this careful study, Pastor Bohr analyzes Philippians 1:21-24 and shows that Paul’s hope was not in the immortality of the soul but rather in the resurrection of the dead.

#6: “The Souls under the Altar” - In this incisive study of Revelation 6:9-11 Pastor Bohr answers several questions: Are the souls under the altar the disembodied spirits of the dead? Which altar are they under and how do they cry out? How does the story of Cain and Abel help to explain this passage? How does this passage relate to the beheaded souls of Revelation 20:4?

#7: “The Spirits of Just Men” - Hebrews 12:22-24 refers to the perfecting of a group of just men whose spirits are seemingly worshiping in heaven. Are the disembodied spirits of the faithful dead now in heaven praising the Lord? A careful study of the passage indicates that the religious world has totally misunderstood this beautiful passage of Scripture.

#8: “Preaching to the Spirits in Prison” - This lecture is a comprehensive study of I Peter 3:18-22. Did Jesus go and preach to the spirits of the dead after He died? Who were these spirits in prison and what did Jesus preach to them? The answers to these questions will surprise you.

#9: “Three Inseparable Distinctive Doctrines”: We must study three biblical doctrines together. If we get one of them wrong, the others will be wrong as well. Those three interlocking doctrines are the judgment, the state of the dead and the second coming of Christ.

#10: “The Dead who stand Before God” - How is it possible for dead people to stand before the judgment seat of God? In this study Pastor Bohr provides convincing evidence that Revelation 20:11-12 describes the millennial stage of

the judgment while Revelation 20:13-15 describes the post-millennial stage. You will be amazed at this study!

#11: “The Resurrection and the Life” - Is there any connection between the story of the rich man and Lazarus and the resurrection of a man called Lazarus? In this lecture, we will see why the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is the only one that contains a proper name. Some amazing new insights into John 11.

#12: “The Keys of Hades” - An exhaustive study of the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades*. Should these words be translated “hell”? Conclusive evidence that these words describe the resting place of the dead and not a place of burning.

#13: “The Rich Man and Lazarus” - Does the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus really teach that the wicked suffer conscious torment immediately after death? What is the central lesson of this story? Pastor Bohr shares many new and fresh insights into the background, the audience, and the theological meaning of this story. Conclusive proof that Jesus did not believe in the immortality of the soul but rather in the resurrection of the dead.

#14: “All Live To Him” (Luke 20) - Did Jesus teach that the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were conscious and alive in His day? An amazing study on why Jesus told the Sadducees that these three Old Testament heroes lived in His day, before the second coming.

#15: “Undying Worm and Unquenchable Fire” - Did you know that the fire which will consume the wicked will never go out? Did you know that the righteous, not the wicked, will live in the everlasting fire? Did you know that the conscious torment of Satan and his angels would last for a long time? A new and fresh approach to the ‘hell passages’ of the Bible.

#16: “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?” - Did Jesus teach that the soul of man is conscious and immortal? In this study, Pastor Bohr

contrasts the view of death of Socrates and the Greek philosophers with the view of Jesus.

#17: “The First Post Modern” - Satan used five methods to deceive Adam and Eve at the beginning of human history and he is using these same methods to take the world captive in these end times.

#18: “Spirits of Devils” - The danger of spiritualism in the last days. Take Revelation 16:13, 14 as the foundation and quotations from Ellen White. The importance of ignoring the senses, emotions, feelings, what others say, the experts, etc. Our only protection will be in an it is written. Talk about Satan’s counterfeit second coming.



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LESSON #1 – THE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE

The Origin of Life

Genesis 2:7:

*“And the LORD God formed man of the **dust** of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath** of life; and man became a **living being [nephesh]**.”*

God did not **give man** a soul; man does not **have** a soul; man **is** a soul. A comparison of **Matthew 16:26** with **Luke 9:25** reveals that the soul is the total person:

Matthew 16:26:

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his **own soul**? Or what will a man give in exchange for **his soul**?”*

Luke 9:25:

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is **himself** destroyed or lost?”*

Man's Original Condition

God created a perfect **body**, in a perfect **environment**, with perfect **laws** of health, and placed a life-sustaining **tree** in the Garden:

Genesis 2:9:

*"And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The **tree of life** was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."*

The life of man was **contingent** or **dependent** on eating from the tree. His life was **not inherent**. The tree was like a **battery charger**. The immortality of man was **conditional** on obedience.

Ellen White confirms what we find in Genesis:

*"The fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden possessed **supernatural virtue**. To eat of it was to live forever. Its fruit was the **antidote of death**. Its leaves were for the sustaining of **life and immortality**." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, p. 288*

*"In order to possess an **endless existence**, man must **continue** to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would **gradually diminish** until life should become **extinct**." Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 60.*

*"Paul conceived man to be **mortal by his original nature**, but with the **prospect of immortality**; this, however, he forfeited when he was driven forth from Eden and therefore from the **tree of life**, which would have **nourished immortality in him**; thus came death through sin." Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man, p. 122.*

The Origin of Death

God explicitly told Adam and Eve that if they ate from the **other tree** they would **surely die**:

Genesis 2:15-17:

*"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat**, for **in the day** that you eat of it you shall **surely die**."*

Satan's **first great deception** was to tell Adam and Eve that they would not die:

Genesis 3:4:

*"And the serpent said to the woman, you shall **not surely die**."*

Adam and Eve both **disobeyed God** and ate from the tree:

Genesis 3:6:

*"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, **she** took of its fruit and **ate**. She also gave to her husband with her, and **he ate**."*

God promised man that he would **return to dust** because of sin:

Genesis 3:19:

*"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till **you [not your body but you]** **return** to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust **you [not your body]** are, and to dust **you [not your body]** shall **return**."*

God **barred access** to the tree and the result was death:

Genesis 3:22-24:

*"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and **live forever**"—²³ therefore the LORD God **sent him out** of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He **drove out the man**; and He placed **cherubim at the east** of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to **guard the way to the tree of life**."*

Human beings **no longer had access** to the tree of life to **recharge their 'battery'**. Furthermore, a deteriorating **environment** and intemperate **personal health habits** wore down the **battery faster**.

- ✓ Human beings **had to continue eating** from the tree of life to **continue living** forever.
- ✓ If man were immortal by nature, **what good would it have done** for God to bar him from the tree?
- ✓ If man were immortal, **why would Jesus need to die** to give him what he **already possessed**?

Life Spans before the Flood

Genesis 5:

At the beginning, God gave man a **fully charged** battery. During the first **1600 years** of human history, men lived **930, 912, 905, 910, 895, 962, 969, 777, 950** years. Yet eventually the battery **wore down** and because there was no access to the battery charger, it **died** and man ceased to function. The **Energizer Bunny** eventually does run out of juice!

*"As Adam and Eve ate of this tree, they acknowledged their dependence upon God. The tree of life possessed the power to **perpetuate life**, and as long as they ate of it, they could not die. The lives of the **antediluvians were protracted** because of*

the life-giving power of this tree, which was transmitted to them from Adam and Eve.” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 7, p. 988

The book of Genesis gives quite a definite account of social and individual life, and yet we have no record of an infant being born blind, deaf, crippled, deformed, or imbecile. There is not an instance upon record of a natural death in infancy, childhood, or early manhood. There is no account of men and women dying of disease. Obituary notices in the book of Genesis run thus: ‘And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.’ ‘And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died.’

“God endowed man with so great vital force that he has withstood the accumulation of disease brought upon the race in consequence of perverted habits, and has continued for six thousand years. This fact of itself is enough to evidence to us the strength and electrical energy that God gave to man at his creation. It took more than two thousand years of crime and indulgence of base passions to bring bodily disease upon the race to any great extent. If Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct.” Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 22, 23

Genesis 5:5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 27, 30; 9:29: For every person on the list (except Enoch) the formula ‘and he died’ appears.

Romans 6:23:

“For the wages of sin is death.” GOD WAS RIGHT!

Romans 5:12:

“Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Life Spans between the Flood and Abraham

According to **Genesis 11** the live span of those who lived between the flood and Abraham was significantly reduced: **600, 438, 433, 464, 239, 239, 230, 148, 205 and 175.**

Factors for the reduction in life spans:

- ✓ A deteriorating **body**
- ✓ A degenerating **environment**
- ✓ A violation of the **laws of health**
- ✓ No access to the **tree of life.**

The Days of Moses

Moses lived to be **120** and was not ill when he died:

Deuteronomy 34:7:

“Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.”

The Days of David

In the days of David and today, the average life span is **seventy or eighty:**

Psalms 90:10:

*“The days of our lives are **seventy years;** and if by reason of strength they are **eighty years,** yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”*

Why no Death that very Day?

God promised that Adam and Eve would die the very day they ate from the tree:

Genesis 2:17:

*"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day** that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Adam and Eve did not die that very day because Jesus offered His life in their place:

Genesis 3:21:

"Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."

1 Peter 1:18-21:

*"... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. ²⁰ He indeed was **foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you."*

*"The **instant** Adam yielded to Satan's temptation, and did the very thing which God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, **stood between** the living and the dead, saying, 'Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand **in man's place**. Give him another trial.' Transgression placed the whole world under the death-sentence. But in heaven there was heard a voice saying, 'I have found a ransom.' Ellen G. White, The Bible Echo, May 21, 1900*

Revelation 13:8:

*"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb **slain from the foundation of the world**."*

Immortality Promised

Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Therefore, we are not immortal by nature but only through Christ.

2 Timothy 1:10:

"... but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

If man were immortal by nature, why would he have to seek for what he already has?

Romans 2:6, 7:

"... who 'will render to each one according to his deeds': ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality."

We Still Die

However, even those who have accepted Jesus still die. Why? Because we still do not have access to the tree of life and our battery runs out. However, all this will change for those who have believed on Jesus:

John 6:39, 40, 44:

"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

If we receive Jesus who is the spiritual tree of life, we have the guarantee of immortality when He comes.

In a certain sense, we can eat from the tree of life **even now**:

*“After the entrance of sin, the heavenly Husbandman **transplanted the tree of life** to the Paradise above; but its branches **hang over the wall** to the lower world. Through the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, **we may still eat** of its life-giving fruit.” Ellen G. White, Heaven, p. 172*

The Final Touch of Immortality

When Jesus comes, the **dead in Christ** will rise and the **living saints** will receive the **touch of immortality**. We must **put on** immortality therefore it does not belong to us by nature:

1 Corinthians 15:51, 55:

*“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **incorruptible**, and we shall be **changed**.⁵³ For this **corruptible** must put on **incorruption**, and this **mortal** must **put on immortality**.⁵⁴ So when this **corruptible** has **put on incorruption**, and this mortal has **put on immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’⁵⁵ “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”*

I once was **talking with a friend** who believes that man is by nature immortal. I asked him: “Do you believe that man is **omnipotent**, **omniscient** and **omnipresent**? He answered, “of course not, only God has these qualities”. Then I asked him another question: Is man by nature immortal? Immortality belongs only **inherently** to God. He can communicate it to man but it will always be contingent on Him.

1 Timothy 6:13-16:

“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,¹⁴ that you keep this

commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ **who alone has immortality**, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

Restoration to the Tree of Life (restored to the charger)

In the life to come there will be no more death:

Revelation 21:4:

*"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be **no more death**, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

We will eat from the tree on life—the battery charger—every month:

Isaiah 66:22, 23:

*"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³ And it shall come to pass that from **one New Moon to another**, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD."*

Revelation 22:1, 2:

*"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the **tree of life**, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit **every month**. The **leaves** of the tree were for the **healing** of the nations."*

"All come forth from their graves the same in stature as when they entered the tomb. Adam, who stands among the risen throng, is of lofty height and majestic form, in stature but little below the Son of God. He presents a marked contrast to

the people of later generations; in this one respect is shown the great degeneracy of the race. But all arise with the freshness and vigor of eternal youth. In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost. He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will “grow up” (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 644

Revelation 2:7:

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give **to eat** from the **tree of life**, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’*

Revelation 22:14, 15 Notice the conditions to be **inside** and **outside**:

*“Blessed are those who **do His commandments** that they may have the **right to the tree of life**, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”*

Ellen White described the tree of life:

*“Here we saw the **tree of life** and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on **either side** of the river was the **tree of life**. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again, and saw that they were **united at the top** in one tree. So it was the tree of life on either side of the river of life. Its branches bowed to the place where we stood, and the fruit was glorious; it looked like gold mixed with silver. Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 17*

Must Receive Jesus Now

Now let us complete our reading of **Romans 6:23** of which we quoted only part before:

*“For the wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

The options available to man are not eternal life in **bliss** or eternal life in **misery**. The options are eternal life or eternal death from which there is no resurrection!

John 3:16:

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should **not perish** but have **everlasting life**.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: The key expression is ‘**in Christ**.’

*“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ** will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

Galatians 3:26, 27: **How** we become in Christ

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ have put on Christ**.”*

1 John 5:11, 12:

*“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son **has life**; he who does not have the Son of God **does not have life**.” [Maybe ‘existence’ but not ‘life’]*



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LESSON #2 – RACHEL’S DEPARTING SOUL

Protestants generally use the story of the death of Rachel to teach that the soul of man is immortal and departs the body at death. In order to share this concept, they add words to Scripture that I have placed in brackets:

Genesis 35:18:

“And so it was, as her [immortal?] soul was departing [to heaven?] (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.”

In order to understand Genesis 35:18 we must go back to the story of the creation of man in Genesis 2.

The Creation of Man

The components of man at creation:

Genesis 2:7:

“And the LORD God formed man of the [1] dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the [2] breath of life [neshamah]; and man became a [3] living being [nephesh].

- God did **not give** man a soul.
- Man does not **have** a soul.
- The soul is **not a part** of man; man **is** a soul.
- Dust + the breath of life = SOUL
- Genesis tells us that man **could die** (Genesis 2:16, 17). As we have seen, man could only **recharge** and **perpetuate** his life by **continuing to eat** from the tree of life.
- This means that man was **conditionally immortal**. When man sinned, God **barred him** from the battery charger and in the course of time, he **died** (Genesis 3:22-24).

The Body of Dust

The **physical organism** of man is composed of **dust or clay**. Upon cremation, all that remains is an **urn of dust**:

Isaiah 64:8:

*"But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the **clay**, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."*

The Word Spirit in the Old Testament

In Hebrew there are two practically **synonymous** Hebrew words that are translated 'spirit' into English: *ruach* and *neshamah* (see Job 27:3; 33:4 where the word 'spirit' is *ruach* and the word 'breath' is *neshamah*).

Neither of these words describe something that is conscious, **immortal** or able to **function independently** of the body.

Hebrew poetry finds its basis on the principle of **parallelism**. There are **three basic types**: Synonymous, antithetical and synthetic.

An examination of the words *ruach* and *neshamah* reveals that the ‘spirit’ is the **vital force**, the **energizing force**, or the **electrical current** that causes the **heart** to pump, the **lungs** to breathe, the **nervous system** to operate, etc.

Job 33:4:

*“The **Spirit [ruach]** of God has made me, and the **breath [neshamah]** of the Almighty gives me life.”*

Job 27:3:

*“As long as my **breath [neshamah]** is in me, and the **breath [ruach]** of God in my nostrils.”*

Isaiah 42:5:

*“Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives **breath [neshamah]** to the people on it, and **spirit [ruach]** to those who walk on it.”*

Animals have *ruach* and *neshamah*:

Genesis 7:22:

*“All in whose **nostrils** was the **breath [neshamah]** of the spirit **[ruach]** of life, all that was on the dry land, died.”*

Ecclesiastes 3:19-21: **Animals** and **humans** have *ruach* and *neshamah*:

*“For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one **breath [neshamah]**; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. ²⁰ All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. ²¹ Who knows the **spirit [ruach]** of the **sons of men**, which goes upward, and the **spirit [ruach]** of the **animal**, which goes down to the earth?”*

Am I saying that man is on the **same level as animals**? In terms of what keeps their **body alive and functioning**, yes! Allow me to **illustrate** what I mean.

Does a **refrigerator use the same energy** source as a computer? Of course it does. Does this mean that the computer and the refrigerator are **identical**? As far as their **energy source** is concerned, the answer is yes. However, their creators made them to fulfill **different functions**. The refrigerator works as a refrigerator and the computer as a computer.

With regards to function, the computer is far **more sophisticated** than the fridge. The energy source merely makes it possible for the computer and the refrigerator to fulfill the **function for which they were created**. Yet neither one can function **without being connected** to the power source! When they are unplugged, they are, so to speak, dead. Even today, when someone cuts a phone line, we say that the **phone went dead**!

Ezekiel 37 contains the famous vision of the valley of the dry bones. There, the **body parts** strewn all over the valley came together, and then the **spirit** entered them and they **stood up and lived**.

Ezekiel 37:9, 10:

*"Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the **breath**, prophecy, son of man, and say to the **breath**, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Come from the four winds, O **breath**, and **breathe** on these **slain**, that they may **live**.'" ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and **breath** came into them, and they **lived**, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."*

The Word Spirit in the New Testament

Let us consider a few **New Testament texts** that use the word '**spirit**'. The word **pneuma** is the **exact Greek** equivalent of **ruach** and **neshamah**:

James 2:26:

*“For as the **body** without the **spirit [pneuma]** is **dead**, so faith without works is dead also.”*

Revelation 11:7-9, 11: Regarding the **two witnesses**:

*“Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and **kill** them. ⁸ And their **dead bodies** will lie in the street of the great city that spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their **dead bodies** three-and-a-half days, and not allow their **dead bodies** to be put into graves. ¹¹ Now, after the three-and-a-half days the **breath [pneuma]** of life from God **entered them**, and they **stood on their feet**, and great fear fell on those who saw them.”*

John 19:30:

*“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His **spirit [pneuma]**.”*

This text simply means that Jesus **died**. The **CEV** translates, ‘He bowed His head and died’. The parallel verse in Luke 23:46 states that Jesus ‘breathed his last’. The Greek word *ekpneo* literally means ‘**to breathe out**’.

The Word Soul in the Old Testament

The word ‘soul’ in the Bible can refer to man’s spiritual nature (for example 1 Thessalonians 5:23). However, when the Bible describes what man is composed of, the word ‘soul’ refers to a **living being**, a person in its **totality**. The King James and New King James Versions are inconsistent when they translate the Hebrew and Greek words for ‘soul’. Sometimes they translate them ‘soul’ and at other times, ‘persons’.

Genesis 2:7:

*“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath** [**neshamah**] of life; and man **became** a **living being** [**nephesh**].”*

Genesis 14:21:

*“Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the **persons** [**nephesh**], and take the goods for yourself.””*

Deuteronomy 10:22:

*“Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy **persons** [**nephesh**], and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.”*

Why does the **KJV** sometimes translate the word nephesh as ‘**person**’ and at other times as ‘**soul**’? There is no explanation other than translators’ **bias**.

Genesis 12:5:

*“Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the **people** [**nephesh**; ‘**souls**’ in the KJV] whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.”*

Leviticus 17:11: The word can also be translated ‘**life**’:

*“For the **life** [**nephesh**] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your **souls** [**nephesh**]; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the **soul** [**nephesh**].”*

Deuteronomy 12:23:

*“Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the **life** [**nephesh**]; you may not eat the **life** [**nephesh**] with the meat.”*

When a person is breathing, the blood carries the **life giving oxygen** to all parts of the body. However, when the **vital force** leaves the body, the blood **ceases to flow**, the body is deprived of life-giving oxygen and the result is death.

1 Kings 19:10: The complaint of **Elijah**:

*"So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and **killed** Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my **life** [**nephesh**]."*

Leviticus 7:20:

*"But the **person** [**nephesh**, 'soul' in the KJV] who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that belongs to the LORD, while he is unclean, that **person** [**nephesh**, 'soul' in the KJV] shall be cut off from his people."*

Psalms 22:20:

*"Deliver **Me** [**nephesh**; my 'soul' in the KJV] from the sword, my **precious life** from the power of the dog."*

Ezekiel 18:4:

*"Behold, all **souls** ['lives' **nephesh**] are Mine; the **soul** ['life' **nephesh**] of the father as well as the **soul** ['life' **nephesh**] of the son is Mine; the **soul** ['living person', **nephesh**] who sins shall die."*

Psalms 30:3:

*"O LORD, You brought my **soul** ['life' **nephesh**] **up** from the **grave** [when a person dies the 'soul' goes down. At the resurrection the 'soul' comes up]; you have kept me alive, that I should not **go down** to the pit."*

Psalm 49:15:

*"But God will redeem my **soul** [**'life'** **nephesh**] from the power of the **grave** [**notice that the soul is delivered from the grave and therefore it must go there after death**], for He shall receive me."*

Genesis 1:21: **Animals** are also *nephesh*:

*"So God created great sea creatures and every **living thing** [**nephesh**] that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."*

As we shall see later in this study, on repeated occasions in the Old Testament, the **New International Version** translates the word *nephesh* simply with a **personal pronoun**.

Numbers 19:10: **Twelve times** the Old Testament refers to a **dead soul** or **corpse**. Here is one example:

*"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a **corpse** [**nephesh**], or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the LORD's Passover."*

The Word Soul in the New Testament

1 Corinthians 15:45: The first and last Adam:

*"And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a **living being** [**psuche**]." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."*

Psalm 16:10: A messianic prophecy where Jesus is speaking one thousand years before His incarnation:

*"For You will not leave my **soul** [**psyche**, **'life'**] in **Sheol** [**'hell'** in the KJV], nor will You allow Your **Holy One** to see **corruption**."*

Acts 2:25-27: Peter quoted this Messianic prophecy from Psalm 16 on the Day of Pentecost:

*"For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. ²⁷ **For [because]** You will not leave my soul [*psyche* 'me' in the NIV] in Hades [*'hell in the KJV*], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."*

When Paul was **shipwrecked** he promised that there would be no loss of life:

Acts 27:22:

*"And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life [*psyche*] among you, but only of the ship."*

The angel warned **Joseph** to flee with baby Jesus because Herod wanted to take the child's life:

Matthew 2:19, 20:

*"But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life [*psyche*] are dead."*

Jesus came to **give his life** as a ransom for many. Jesus could have used other words for life such as **bios** and **zoé** but he used the word '*psyche*'.

Matthew 20:28:

*"... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life [*psyche*] a ransom for many."*

The **Good Shepherd** gives His life for the sheep:

John 10:11:

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his **life** [psyche] for the sheep."*

Paul and Barnabas risked their lives for the name:

Acts 15:26:

*"... Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their **lives** [psyche] for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Paul did not count his life dear to himself:

Acts 20:24:

*"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my **life** [psyche] dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."*

Three thousand souls received baptism on Pentecost:

Acts 2:41:

*"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand **souls** [psyche] were added to them."*

One hundred and seventy-six persons survived a **shipwreck**:

Acts 27:37:

*"And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six **persons** [psyche] on the ship."*

Every soul must be subject to the **ruling authorities**:

Romans 13:1:

*“Let every **soul [psyche]** be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”*

It is worthless to gain the **whole world** and lose one’s soul:

Matthew 16:26:

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own **soul [psyche]**? Or what will a man give in exchange for his **soul [psyche]**?”*

Luke uses teaches the same lesson as Matthew 16:26 but uses the personal pronoun ‘himself’ instead of the word ‘soul’:

Luke 9:25:

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is **himself** destroyed or lost?”*

God struck **King Herod** and he gave up his **psyche**:

Acts 12:23:

*“Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and **died [exepsychen literally: ‘gave up his soul’]**.”*

In the story of the death of **Ananias and Saphira** the **NASB** tell us that giving up the ghost means to die:

Acts 5:5, 10:

*“And immediately she fell at his feet and **breathed her last [exepsychen]**, and the young men came in and found her **dead**, and they carried her out and **buried her** beside her husband.”*

The **New International Version**, frequently renders the word 'soul' with a **personal pronoun** or the like:

- Acts 2:27, 31: **Me**: 'you will not leave my **soul** in hell'
- Acts 2:43: **Everyone**: 'fear came upon every **soul**'
- Romans 2:9: **Human being**: 'tribulation and anguish upon every **soul** who does evil'
- Romans 13:1: **Everyone**: 'let every **soul** be subject to the higher powers'
- Hebrews 10:38: **I**: 'if one draws back, my **soul** has no pleasure in him'
- Hebrews 10:39: 'saving of the soul' in the KJV is '**those** who are saved' in the NIV
- James 5:20: **Him**: 'he who converts a sinner saves a **soul** from death'
- Luke 21:19: **Yourselves**: 'in your patience possess ye your souls'
- Acts 2:41: The word 'soul' is **not even translated** in the **NIV**: 'two thousand were added'
- Hebrews 13:7: **You**: 'submit to those who rule because they watch out for your **souls**'
- Matthew 12:18: **I**: 'Behold my servant with whom my soul is well pleased'

Let's compare Luke 12:19, 20 in the New King James and the New International:

Luke 12:19-21 NKJV:

*"And I will say to my **soul** [**psyche**], "**Soul** [**psyche**], you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your **soul** [**psyche**] will be required of you; then who's will those things be which you have provided?' ²¹ So is he who lays up treasure for **himself** and is not rich toward God."*

Luke 12:19, 20, NIV:

*"And I'll say to **myself** [KJV: 'my soul'], '**You** ['soul' KJV] have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your **life** [KJV 'soul'] will be demanded from you.'"*

We use this type of **figurative language** in our speech even today when we say:

- 'Not a soul showed up for the **meeting**'.
- 'One hundred souls were **baptized**'.
- 'I feel **sorry** for that poor soul.'

A soul can die because it can be saved from death:

James 5:20:

*"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a **soul** [psyche] from **death** [so the soul can die if it can be saved from death] and cover a multitude of sins."*

Animals are living being as well as human beings:

Revelation 16:3:

*"Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every **living creature** [psyche] in the sea **died**."*

When Paul waxed long, Eutychus fell out of a window:

Acts 20:10:

*"But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his **life** [psyche; same as KJV] is in him."*

Does the following text say that this young man's soul or life was **intangible**, **immortal** or **conscious**? No.

1 Kings 17:17, 21, 22:

*"Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no **breath [neshamah]** left in him. ¹⁸ So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to **kill** my son?" ²¹ And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's **[immortal soul from heaven?] soul [nephesh]** come back to him." ²² Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the **soul [nephesh]** of the child came back to him, and he **revived [this word means "to live again"]**.*

Matthew 10:28:

*"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot **kill** the **soul [psyche]**. But rather fear Him who is able to **destroy** both **soul [psyche]** and body in hell."*

The contrast here is between the **present life and the future life**. What it is saying is this:

*"Don't fear those who are able to take away your **present physical life** but cannot take away your **eternal life**. Rather fear the one who **can do both!**"*

The key to understand Matthew 10:28 is in **verse 39:**

*"He who finds his **[present] life [psyche]** will lose it, and he who loses his **[present] life [psyche]** for My sake will find it **[eternal life]**."*

The sense is even clearer in the parallel passage of **Luke 12:4, 5:**

*"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the **body**, and after that have **no more that they can do**.⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, **after He has killed**, has power to cast into **hell**; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"*

Body, Soul and Spirit

Another text that has confused those who believe in the immortality of the soul is 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24 where man seems to have **three parts**:

*"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you **completely**; and may your **whole spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴ He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."*

There is no reason for this text to confuse us. No one denies that human nature has **three dimensions**—physical, mental and spiritual. However, nowhere does the Bible tell us that one dimension can function or live independently of the others. Nowhere does any text say that the soul dimension is conscious, immortal and leaves the body at death. The point of the text is that God wants to **sanctify us completely**—physically, mentally and spiritually.

Ellen White was a staunch believer in the unity of human nature and yet she could speak of three dimensions, body, soul and spirit:

*"Ignorance, pleasure loving, and sinful habits, corrupting **soul, body, and spirit**, make the world full of moral leprosy; a deadly moral malaria is destroying thousands and tens of thousands." Ellen G. White, Adventist Home, p. 329*

The university where I taught in Medellin has a monument in front of the administration building with a **triangle** that says '*mano, mente y corazón*' that means hand, mind and heart. Ellen White described true education as 'the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers'. Education, p. 13.

Our original text

Let's go back for a few moments to the text with which we started this lesson:

Genesis 35:18:

"And so it was, as her [immortal?] soul was departing [to heaven?] (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin."

Psalms 146:4:

"His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans [thoughts: KJV] perish."

Psalms 104:29, 30:

"You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth."

Genesis 3:19:

"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return."

Ecclesiastes 12:7:

"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."

Romans 6:23: There are only **two options** are available: **Life and death**. We must not attempt to redefine death to mean '**everlasting life in misery**.'



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #3 – A THIEF AND A WITCH

Two Malefactors

When Jesus was crucified, two criminals were crucified on each side:

Luke 23:32, 33:

“There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. ³³ And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.”

Repentant Thief

At first, both criminals mocked Jesus but then one of them repented and rebuked his fellow partner in crime and begged Jesus to remember him when He entered into His kingdom:

Luke 23:39-43:

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” ⁴⁰ However, the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man

has done **nothing wrong**." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, **remember me** when You **come into** Your kingdom."

Jesus responded to the thief's plea with the following words:

Luke 23:43:

*"And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, **today** you will be with Me in Paradise."*

No Punctuation Marks

Did Jesus promise the thief that he would be with Him in paradise that very day? In order to answer this question, we must remember that the **New Testament manuscripts** had **no punctuation marks**. This is important because there is some discussion about where to place a comma in this verse.

There are two possibilities:

- Without exception, Bible versions place the comma after the word 'thee':
*"Verily I say unto thee, **today** you will be with me in paradise."*
- However, the verse can also legitimately be translated by placing the comma after the word 'today':
*"Verily I say unto thee **today**, you will be with me in paradise."*

The Three Heavens

The next question that engages us is the location of Paradise. The Bible describes three heavens as we can see from the experience of Paul:

2 Corinthians 12:2-4:

*"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know **[in person or in vision]**, God*

knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.³ And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven where the birds fly:

Genesis 1:8:

“And God called the firmament heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.”

The second heaven is the stellar universe:

Genesis 15:5:

“Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

The third heaven is the place where God’s throne and the tree of life are. Let’s consider the Biblical evidence for this.

The Location of Paradise

The Jews of Christ’s day believed that Paradise was an intermediary holding place where Old Testament saints went before the resurrection of Christ. However, this view does not square with the biblical evidence. The evidence clearly indicates that paradise is in the New Jerusalem where God’s throne and the tree of life are.

Revelation 2:7: The tree of life is in Paradise:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Revelation 22:1, 2: The throne of God is in the same place as the tree of life, in the New Jerusalem.

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

Revelation 22:14: The tree of life is inside the gates of the New Jerusalem:

“Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

The conclusion is inevitable. If Jesus and the thief went to paradise that very day, then they the both went to the New Jerusalem where the Father sits on His throne.

Intertestamental Speculation

As stated before, The Jews during the intertestamental period, developed an extra-biblical tradition that paradise was an intermediary place where the souls of the Old Testament righteous went before they entered into the presence of God. Many Protestants today have embraced this view saying that paradise was a temporary holding house for the souls of the righteous Old Testament saints until Jesus died on the cross.

However, as we have seen, Scripture clearly teaches that paradise is located in the New Jerusalem on the banks of the River of Life that flows directly from the throne of God. If Jesus had meant to say that He and the thief would go to paradise that very day, then they must have gone to the presence of God in heaven itself.

Where did Jesus go at death?

Where did Jesus actually go on the day of His crucifixion? The Bible teaches that He remained **in the grave** until the resurrection on Sunday morning. The New King James Version reads as follows:

Acts 2:25-27 NKJV:

*"For David says concerning **Him**: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. ²⁷ For You will not leave **my soul** in **Hades**, nor will You allow **Your Holy One** to see **corruption**.'" Notice here that the soul is equivalent to the Holy One in the synonymous parallelism.*

The New International Version of **Acts 2:27** is even clearer:

*"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; **my body** also will live in hope, because you will not abandon **me** to the **grave**, nor will you let your **Holy One** see **decay**."*

It is puzzling that the **KJV** translates the word *hades* in **1Corinthians 15:55** with the word 'grave' but in Acts 2:27 it translates it as 'hell'. Why the inconsistency? The word **hades** is equivalent to the Hebrew word **Sheol** and means, 'the grave.' More on this in an upcoming lecture.

On what day and at which **hour** did Jesus **die**?

Matthew 27:46-50:

*"And about the **ninth hour** [**three o'clock in the afternoon**] Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ⁴⁷ Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink.*

⁴⁹ The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." ⁵⁰ And Jesus **cried out again** [**'it is finished'** and **'into your hands I commend my spirit'**] with a loud voice, and **yielded up His spirit.**"

He made his **request** to Jesus on the **very day** He died:

Luke 23:42:

*"Then he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me **when you come into your kingdom.**"*

Did Jesus come into His **kingdom the very day He died**? Of course not! How could Jesus come into His kingdom if He had not broken the **fetters of the tomb**? Jesus did not enter into His kingdom until **He sat with His Father** on His throne upon the ascension (Revelation 12:5).

Jesus **resurrected** from the dead on the first day of the week on the third day after His death.

John 20:1:

*"On the **first day** of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."*

Early in the morning of resurrection day, Jesus met Mary in the Garden and told her **not to touch Him**:

John 20:17:

*"Jesus said to her, "Do not **cling** to Me, for I have **not yet ascended** to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I **am ascending** to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"*

Some **Bible versions** have contended that the expression '*don't touch me*' really means '*don't cling to me*'. However, is this the case? This word 'touch' is used

repeatedly in the New Testament to describe the **act of touching**, not necessarily clinging.

The NIV is an example of this inconsistency when it translates the Greek word *japto* with the word 'touch' in every single verse (35 of 36) except in this one. Why the inconsistency? Notice the following examples:

- Jesus touched **a leper** and he was healed (Matthew 8:3). Did Jesus cling to the leper?
- A woman with an issue of blood **touched the hem** of Christ's garment (Mark 5:31). **If she was clinging** to Jesus, the Lord would not have asked who touched the hem of His garment!
- The **multitude** wanted to touch Jesus in order to be healed (Luke 6:19).
- **Parents** brought their children to Jesus so that He would **touch** them (Luke 18:15).
- Jesus touched the **eyes of the blind** and they could see (Matthew 20:34). Did Jesus **cling to the eyes** of the blind?

Why would Jesus say to Mary on resurrection morning, *'don't cling to me because I have not yet ascended to my Father'* if He would not ascend until **forty days later**? Could Mary cling to Jesus and **detain Him** from going to heaven for **40 days**?

Further, the verb '**ascending**' that is used in this verse (*'I **am ascending** to my Father and your Father'*) is in the **first person, indicative, active tense**. Jesus was not referring to his ascension forty days after His resurrection because in that case He would have used the **future tense** ('will ascend') rather than the present!

The **morning** of the **very day** that Jesus resurrected He told Mary not to touch Him. Also, in the evening, Jesus encouraged His disciples to touch Him. Thus, at

some point between resurrection morning and the evening, Jesus must have ascended to His Father in heaven.

Ellen White has some interesting information on the encounter of Jesus with Mary in the **Garden of Gethsemane** the morning of the resurrection:

*"Jesus spoke to her with His own heavenly voice, saying, "Mary!" She was acquainted with the tones of that dear voice, and quickly answered, "Master!" and in her joy was **about to embrace Him**; but Jesus said, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Joyfully she hastened to the disciples with the good news. **Jesus quickly ascended to His Father** to hear from His lips that He accepted the sacrifice, and **to receive all power** in heaven and upon earth." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 187, 188*

In **Matthew 28:19**, before His final ascension to heaven Jesus said:

*"All power **has been given** [*indicative passive aorist*] to me in heaven and on earth".*

A better translation would be 'all power **was given** to me'. Thus, before His ascension from the Mount of Olives, Jesus had **already received** from His Father all power in heaven and on earth!

The trip of Jesus to His Father on resurrection morning must be understood in the light of the feast of first fruits in the Old Testament. In harmony with the Old Testament type, Jesus, as priest, Jesus resurrected as the first fruits and presented Himself before the Father at the entrance to the heavenly sanctuary at the precise hour prescribed. Here is how Ellen White described it:

*"Angels **like a cloud surrounded the Son of God** and bade the everlasting gates be lifted up, that the King of glory might come in. I saw that while Jesus was with that bright heavenly host, in the presence of God, and surrounded by His glory, He*

did not forget His disciples upon the earth, but received power from His Father, that He might return and impart power to them [**He did in the Upper Room when He breathed upon them the Holy Spirit**]. The same day He returned and showed Himself to His disciples. He suffered them then to touch Him; for He had ascended to His Father and had received power.” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 187, 188:

Jesus fulfilled the wave sheaf ceremony when He made this quick journey to heaven on the morning of the resurrection. At precisely 9:00 AM the Father met Jesus at the entrance to the heavenly sanctuary (see Acts 2:15 for proof). Jesus needed to hear from His Father’s own lips that His sacrifice had been accepted (see Deuteronomy 26:10).

Therefore, the correct place to put the comma is after the word ‘today’ rather than after the word ‘you’. We find a similar grammatical construction in the following verse:

Deuteronomy 30:18:

“I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.”

The Witch of Endor

King Saul spent most of his time persecuting David and almost totally ignored the administration of the kingdom. The Philistines took advantage of Saul’s negligence and gained a huge military advantage over Israel. Saul was losing the kingdom and he was desperate:

1 Samuel 28:5:

“When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.”

There are **several reasons** why we know that Samuel did not come from the dead to speak to Saul.

First, Saul's desperation led him to consult the Lord about what to do. God had established certain **conventional methods** to answer Israel's requests and Saul **used these methods** but God did not answer!

1 Samuel 28:6:

*"And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD **did not answer him**, either by **dreams** or by **Urim** or by the **prophets**."*

By this time, the prophet Samuel was **dead** and **buried** and Saul had cast the **mediums and spiritists** out of the land:

1 Samuel 28:3:

*"Now Samuel had **died**, and all Israel had lamented for him and **buried** him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists **out of the land**."*

Second, the Bible tells us that the dead **know nothing**:

Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6:

*"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."*

Third, if God did not respond by **conventional methods** why would he respond by using a method that He Himself had forbidden? Does God go **against His own established counsel**? Would Samuel, who had obeyed God in life, now **disobey Him in death**?

Leviticus 20:27:

*'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be **put to death**; they shall **stone them with stones**. Their blood shall be upon them.'*

Leviticus 19:31:

*"Give **no regard** to mediums and familiar spirits; **do not seek after them**, to be **defiled** by them: I am the LORD your God."*

Fourth, Saul knew that what he was doing was contrary to God's will. **Saul had destroyed** all the mediums from the land.

1 Samuel 28:9:

*"Then the woman said to him, "Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has **cut off the mediums and the spiritists** from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"*

1 Samuel 28:7, 8: **Saul disguised himself** because he knew that what he was doing was wrong!

*"Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at Endor."⁸ So Saul **disguised himself** and put on **other clothes**, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman **by night** and he said, "Please conduct a **séance** for me, and **bring up** for me the one I shall name to you."*

Fifth, Samuel was a righteous man and therefore we would have expected him to come down from heaven to speak to Saul. However, the communicating entity did not come down but rather, up.

1 Samuel 28:11:

*"Then said the woman, 'Whom shall I **bring up** unto thee?' And he said, '**Bring me up** Samuel.'"*

Sixth, the witch of Endor referred to Samuel **as a god**. This was the same lie that Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden:

1 Samuel 28:13:

*"And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What did you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I saw a spirit [KJV: '**gods': Elohim**] **ascending** out of the earth."*

Genesis 3:4, 5:

*"Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil."*

Seventh, Saul bowed down in worship before the **Samuel impostor**. This could not have been Samuel because he would have told Saul to get up. After all, Cornelius bowed before Peter and Peter told him to get up and worship only God. Even angels refuse to have humans bow before them. One also wonders why Samuel looked like an old man who was covered with a mantle.

1 Samuel 28:14:

*"So he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An **old man** is **coming up**, and he is **covered with a mantle**." And Saul **perceived** that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his **face to the ground and bowed down**."*

Eighth, the Samuel impostor claimed that Saul would be **with him the next day**. Would the righteous man Samuel go to the same place, as the demon possessed Saul?

1 Samuel 28:19:

*"Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And **tomorrow** you and your sons **will be with me**. The LORD will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."*

Ninth, Hebrews 11 tells us that Samuel is on the **honor roll** of the **saved** and will come forth from the grave at the **better resurrection**:

Hebrews 11:32:

*"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and **Samuel** and the prophets. . ."*

Hebrews 11:35:

*"Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a **better resurrection**."*

Tenth, the parallel text in 1 Chronicles tells us clearly that Saul did not inquire of the Lord. If Saul did not inquire of the Lord, then the Lord did not answer him:

1 Chronicles 10:13, 14:

*"So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. ¹⁴ But he **did not inquire of the LORD**; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse."*

Isaiah 8:19, 20: to seek after mediums and wizards is the opposite of seeking God:

*"And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people **seek their God**? Should they seek the*

dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ **To the law and to the testimony!** If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

The text does not tell us that the entity that spoke was Samuel. It tells us that Saul ‘perceived’ that it was Samuel and demons had possessed Saul’s perceptions at this point.

1 Samuel 28:14:

“And Saul **perceived** [*also NASB*] that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his.”

1 Samuel 16:14: Saul’s powers of perception at this point were **unreliable**.

“But the Spirit of the LORD **departed** from Saul, and an **evil spirit** from the LORD troubled him.”

Who was this evil spirit from the Lord? Does the Lord **send evil spirits** to people using methods that He Himself has forbidden, while he bypasses the methods he has approved? The answer is no! However, God **does allow Satan** to do it.

Ellen White offers this perceptive analysis of this episode:

“When Saul inquired for Samuel, the **Lord did not cause Samuel** to appear to Saul. He saw nothing. Satan was not allowed to disturb the rest of Samuel in the grave, and bring him up in reality to the witch of Endor. God does not give Satan power to resurrect the dead. But Satan’s angels assume the **form of dead friends**, and **speak and act like them**, that through professed dead friends he can the better carry on his work of **deception**. Satan **knew Samuel well**, and he knew how to represent him before the witch of Endor, and to utter correctly the fate of Saul and his sons.” Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 172

Ellen G. White also wrote the following about the **deception of Spiritism**:

*"He has power to bring before men the **appearance** of their departed friends. The **counterfeit is perfect**; the familiar **look**, the **words**, the **tone** are reproduced with **marvelous distinctness**. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are **enjoying the bliss of heaven**, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear 'to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.' Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 552.*

Why does Satan lead people to consult the dead and how does he deceive them?

*"Satan leads men to consult those that have familiar spirits; and by revealing **hidden things of the past** [Satan knows everyone's past to the minutest detail, even the secret things], he inspires confidence in his power to foretell **things to come**. By **experience** gained through the long ages, he can reason from **cause to effect** and often forecast with a **degree of accuracy**, some of the future events of man's life. Thus he is **enabled to deceive** poor, misguided souls and bring them under his power and lead them captive at his will." Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 687.*

Satan is able to predict what he intends to do **before it occurs**. For example, **Jeane Dixon** predicted with amazing accuracy the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In Parade Magazine on May 13, 1956 she predicted that the election of 1960 would be 'dominated by labor and won by a democrat.' She went on to predict that the winner of the election would "go on to be assassinated or die in office though not necessarily in his first term".

In the present Satan uses his angels, channelers, astrologers, crystal ball gazers, palm readers, psychics, counterfeit Virgin Marys and supposed spirits of dead saints because these methods are **entirely under his control**. Our only safety is to trust in the **Bible** and the Bible only!



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #4 – ABSENT FROM THE BODY AND PRESENT WITH THE LORD

Principles to keep in mind

Before we examine 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 we need to review some principles of Bible study.

First, Peter stated that Paul wrote some things that are hard to understand which the unlearned twist to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-17). This means that Bible study is not always easy. Profound Bible study requires time and effort. It is not enough to read the Bible—we must search it (see John 5:39). There is a great danger of being hasty and superficial in our Bible study because we have not carefully examined and correlated all the evidence. Bible study is like detective work, looking for clues here and there and then reaching conclusions. Our study must be meticulous and exhaustive.

Second, we should always pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our study. The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible and for this reason only He can explain what it means. We may need to pray several times as we struggle with the text.

Third, we must attempt to discover what the **text means** before we try to determine what it means personally to us. The Bible text has an **objective**, inherent meaning independently of what we think.

The danger of Bible study groups where people ask: ‘What does this text mean to you?’ is that we will put **our own spin** on the text instead of allowing the text to speak for itself. As a result, we end up with many opinions about the text but not necessarily with the meaning that the writer intended. Sad to say, in many Bible study groups, what the people are doing is ‘**pooling everyone’s ignorance**’! The apostle Peter assures us that no prophecy is of any ‘**private interpretation**’ (2 Peter 1:20). In short, beware of determining what a Bible text means to you until you are sure what the **text really means**!! We are to extract from the Bible what it means (exegesis) rather than putting into the Bible what we think it means or what we want it to say (eisegesis).

Fourth, we must carefully examine **the context** (what comes **before and after** the passage you are studying). Many times the context contains the key that unlocks the meaning of the passage that we are struggling with.

Fifth, when we read the Bible, we must **mark the key words** and write our own **notes and comments** in the margins. We must saturate our mind with the Bible by reading it **repeatedly**. In this way, when we are studying a passage, many other related Bible passages will come to mind and help us understand the specific passage we are considering.

Sixth, if we are not able to read the original languages, we should read the passage in as many **Bible versions** as possible. It is highly unlikely (though once in a while it does happen) that all the Bible versions are wrong in their translation. Be very careful with **paraphrases and amplified** versions. These are not really versions but rather interpretations.

Seventh, do a careful study of the meaning of **key words** in the passage. We can do this by using a Bible Concordance such as **Strong’s**. Frequently the same

words appear in **other passages** of the Bible. A careful study of these words in other passages of the Bible will help us understand them much better than if we just stayed within the passage that we are considering.

Eighth, look at the **marginal references** for any parallel passages to the one that we are studying. These are sometimes priceless.

Ninth, study the **grammar and syntax** of the passage (verb tenses and word order). We do not need to know the original languages to do this. Many resources in English can help us in this regard. Good **Greek/English and Hebrew/English** Lexicons are invaluable.

Tenth, we must learn to **ask questions** of the passage that we are studying. A good detective is a **good questioner**. Some of you might be too young to remember Lieutenant Colombo. He asked and asked until the guilty party incriminated himself.

What does the passage **say**? What does the passage **not say**? Why does it say things in the way that it does? **Who wrote** the passage? **To whom** did he write it? What **special circumstances** and needs led him to write it? **From where** did the author write? **When** did the author write it?

We must learn to **reflect** on what we are reading. It is like looking in a mirror. We look into the mirror and suddenly the mirror starts looking at us. In other words, the mirror talks back. We should study the Bible and then the Bible will study us.

Eleventh, after we have done all our research, study what **Ellen White** said about the biblical passage. Read the **Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary** and other Christian **commentaries** as well. Even after we have intensely studied the passage we might have missed some important information which others have seen.

Twelfth, when we have finished our research, we can put all the information together, reach our conclusions and see how the passage **can help our spiritual life** by enhancing it, protecting it, enriching it and correcting it. We must now be willing **to obey** what we have learned. The purpose of Bible study is not to increase our intellectual knowledge. The final goal of all Bible study is obedience!

Questions regarding 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Look at the **immediate context** (4:16-18). What is the apostle Paul contrasting in these verses? (There are at least five contrasts). How do these contrasts help us understand the central thought of the 2 Corinthians 5:1-10?

Why does Paul describe our '**earthly house**' as a 'tabernacle' but our '**heavenly house**' as a 'building'? Are the words 'house' and 'building' the same in Greek or are they different? (Strong's will be a great help here!)

What does **Paul mean** by 'earthly house' and 'heavenly house'? (Clue: Job 4:19; 10:9; 2 Peter 1:13-15. How do you suppose I found these parallel passages?).

Can we have both houses **at the same time** or only one at a time?

What does the expression '**not with hands**' mean? (Clue: Daniel 2:34, 34; Hebrews 9:11; Mark 14:58; Luke 24:36-43)

What does Paul mean when he says that **we 'groan'**? According to the apostle, for what are we groaning and why? (Clue: In Romans 8:22, 23 Paul uses the same word. Where do you suppose I discovered the link with Romans?)

Is our heavenly house already **waiting for us**, even now?

Why does Paul say that we are 'burdened' (verse 4) by our present home?

What does Paul mean by the words '**unclothed**' and '**naked**' (verse 4)? **When** is it that we are 'unclothed' or left 'naked' (verse 4)? Did the apostle Paul desire to be 'unclothed' or 'naked'?

According to Paul, when will 'mortality be **swallowed up in life**'? Does this take place the moment a person dies or when Jesus comes again? (Clue: 1Corinthians 15:50-55 uses **three key words** that we find in our passage of study. What are these three words and how do they help us explain our passage?)

Does **Philippians 3:20, 21** help us understand Paul's lesson in this passage?

What does God give us as an assurance that someday soon we will receive our heavenly building? (verse 5) (Clue: You will find the same word '**earnest**' in Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 15:16-23)

Does this passage ever use the words '**soul**' or '**spirit**'? Does Paul say: 'As soon as I die, I want my immortal soul to be absent from the body and present with the Lord?'

In the light of the entire passage, what does Paul mean by the expression '**absent from the body**'? To what other word in the passage would the word 'body' be equivalent? To what other expression in this passage would the expression 'present with the Lord' be equivalent?

According to Paul, **when** will we be with the Lord? Will it be the moment a person dies or at the resurrection, when Jesus comes? (Clue: 1 Thessalonians 4:17)

Why does Paul include the statement, 'For we walk by faith, not by sight' (verse 7)? **When** do we walk by faith and when shall we walk by sight? (Clue: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Romans 8:24)

Be we here or there, what should be our **greatest desire** (verse 9)?

How does **2 Timothy 4:6-8** help us comprehend the passage that we are studying?

Does God **judge a person** the moment they die or has He set a certain day on which He will judge the whole world? (Clue: Verse 10; Acts 17:30, 31; Revelation 14:7)

Paul wrote things difficult to understand

Several of the Misinterpreted texts on the state of the dead are in the writings of the apostle Paul. However, rather than blaming Paul, Peter blames the untaught and unstable for twisting them to their own destruction as they do the other Scriptures:

2 Peter 3:15, 16:

*“. . . and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are **some things hard to understand**, which **untaught** and **unstable** people **twist** to their own destruction, as they do also the **rest** of the Scriptures.”*

The Passage

The passage we are going to study in this lesson is 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. This is the passage that Christians use most in an attempt to prove the immortality of the soul. Here is the entire passage with my own explanatory notes in brackets:

*“For we know that if our **earthly house** [**oikos**], this **tent** [**skene**], is destroyed, we **have** a **building** [**oikodomeo**] from God, a house **not made with hands**, eternal in the **heavens**. ² For in this we **groan**, **earnestly desiring** to be **clothed** with our habitation [**oikoterion**] that is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been*

clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Paul here contrasts now and later (time), here and there (space)

In order to understand Paul’s teaching in this passage we must consider the immediately preceding context where Paul is contrasting our present life with life after the second coming:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

The earthly tent and the heavenly building

2 Corinthians 5:1:

In this verse, Paul will begin to develop the contrast between the present life here on earth and our future life in heaven. We shall find that he compares our present house with a tent and our future house with a building:

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed [dissolved, disintegrated], we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Important Terminology:

- ✓ **Skene** (“tabernacle”) = Paul compares our body in this life on earth with a **transitory tent** made **with hands**, which is easily dissolved. The word ‘tabernacle’ is used to describe the **tabernacle tent** in the wilderness.
- ✓ **Oikoterion** (“building”) = Paul assures believers that they **have** (present tense) a **permanent** and incorruptible building not made with hands **in** the heavens.

This is the contrast:

- ✓ **Earthly** house, **tent**, **dissolved**.
- ✓ **Heavenly** house, **building**, incorruptible and **eternal**.

An Important Fact:

According to the text, we **already have** the building in heaven **while we still live in the tent** on earth. The apostle Paul does not say that we ‘will have a building’ in heaven. God already has it prepared for us.

By way of analogy, the children of Israel **camped in tents** during their pilgrimage across the wilderness. However, when they entered the Promised Land, they lived in **permanent buildings**.

While we are strangers and **pilgrims on earth**, we live in our **bodily tent** but when Jesus comes, we will receive our **permanent building** that He has already prepared for us before we get there.

What is the earthly tent?

Our present house or body of **clay** is **fragile** and **breakable**:

Job 4:19:

*“How much more those who **dwell** in **houses of clay** whose foundation is in the **dust**, who are **crushed** before a moth?”*

Once again Job describes our present body with fragile clay (see also Isaiah 64:8):

Job 10:9:

*“Remember, I pray, that You have made me **like clay**. And will You turn me into **dust** again?”*

Peter and the Earthly Tent

The apostle Peter also compared our present fragile and corruptible body with a tent that is put off when a person dies:

2 Peter 1:13-15:

*“Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in **this tent**, to stir you up by reminding you, ¹⁴ knowing that shortly I must **put off my tent** [key question: ***When will he put on his building which God has in store in heaven?***], just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. ¹⁵ Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my **decease** [Luke 9:31: ***Exodus or departure***].*

The expression “made without hands”

The expression ‘made with hands’ refers to the body ‘made by our parents’ when we are born. The expression ‘made without hands’ refers to the supernatural resurrected body that Jesus will give us when He comes (see Philippians 3:20, 21):

Mark 14:58:

*"We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is **made with hands**, and within three days I will build another **made without hands**.' [John 2:19-21 tells us that the temple was his body] "*

Jesus had a **real body after His resurrection** but it was an **incorruptible, immortal** and **glorified** body. His resurrection body was not the result of **human procreation** but rather the fruit of an instantaneous **supernatural miracle** of God. Jesus had a real physical body when He resurrected but it was not a tent but rather a building:

Luke 24:39-43:

*"Behold My **hands** and My **feet**, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh** and **bones** as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His **hands and His feet**. ⁴¹ But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" ⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³ And He took it and **ate in their presence**."*

The apostle Paul tells us that the earthly sanctuary was made with hands but the heavenly was 'not made with hands':

Hebrews 9:11:

*"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle **not made with hands**, that is, **not of this creation**."*

Like our bodies, present kingdoms are corruptible and pass away but God's kingdom, 'made without hands' will last forever:

Daniel 2:34, 44:

*"You watched while a stone was cut out **without hands**, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces . . . And in the days of these*

*kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which **shall never be destroyed**; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."*

Paul's groaning for his house from heaven

The apostle Paul was groaning because he wanted God to give him his glorified body:

2 Corinthians 5:2:

*"For in this we **groan**, **earnestly desiring** to be **clothed** with our **habitation [house]** which is **from heaven**."*

Romans 8:23:

*"Not only that, but we also who have the **first fruits** of the Spirit, even we ourselves **groan** within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the **redemption of our body**."*

A Third Option: 'Nakedness'

The apostle Paul now introduces a **third option** besides living in the present tent or receiving the building from heaven. There is also the possibility of 'being unclothed':

2 Corinthians 5:2, 3:

*"For in this we **groan**, earnestly desiring to be **clothed** with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been **clothed**, we shall not be found **naked**."*

So here the apostle Paul presents **three options** and he prefers only one of them. He can live in the present body, receive his glorified body from heaven or be 'naked':

- ✓ Living in the **present tabernacle** ('clothed').

- ✓ Being clothed upon with the **heavenly building** ('further clothed').
- ✓ Being is a state of **nakedness** (unclothed).

The link between 2 Corinthians 5 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-55

A passage in 1 Corinthians 15 will expand our understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:

2 Corinthians 5:4:

*"For we who are in this tent [1] **groan**, being **burdened**, not because we want to be **unclothed**, but [2] **further clothed**, that [3] **mortality** may be [4] **swallowed up** by life."*

Key Expressions in Verse 4

- "groan"
- "mortality"
- "clothed upon"
- "swallowed up"

1 Corinthians 15:50-55:

*"Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood [the present tent]** cannot inherit the **kingdom of God**; nor does **corruption [the present tent]** inherit **incorruption [the heavenly building]**.⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all **sleep [being naked]**, but we shall all be changed—**[receive our resurrected body]**⁵² in a moment, in the **twinkling of an eye [not by natural means]**, at the **last trumpet [at the second coming]**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **incorruptible [the heavenly building]**, and we shall be changed **[from the tent to the building]**.⁵³ For this corruptible must **put on [be clothed]** incorruption, and this **mortal** must **put on [be clothed]** immortality.⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has **put on [be clothed]** incorruption, and this mortal has **put on [be clothed]** immortality then shall be brought to pass*

the saying that is written: "Death is **swallowed up** in victory." ⁵⁵ "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

The apostle Paul was clear that we will receive our heavenly building, not at death, but at the second coming:

Philippians 3:20, 21:

*"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also **eagerly wait** for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our **lowly body [the tent]** that it may be conformed to His **glorious body [the building]**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

The Present Guarantee

God has given us the **Holy Spirit** even **now** as a guarantee that at the second coming we will receive our **heavenly building**.

2 Corinthians 5:5:

*"Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us **the Spirit** as a **guarantee**."*

The word 'guarantee' means an 'earnest, a security deposit, a down payment'. The **down payment** we have now, guarantees that we will receive the heavenly building when Jesus comes. Jesus is the **first fruits** and the **Holy Spirit** is the **guarantee**:

1 Corinthians 15:17-23:

*"And if **Christ is not risen** your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also **those who have fallen asleep in Christ** have perished. ¹⁹ If in **this life** only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the **first fruits** of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each*

one in his own order: **Christ the first fruits**, afterward those who are Christ's **at His coming**.”

2 Corinthians 1:21, 22:

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, ²² who also has **sealed us** and given us the **Spirit** in our hearts as a **guarantee**.”

Ephesians 1:13, 14:

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed** with the **Holy Spirit** of promise, ¹⁴ who is the **guarantee of our inheritance** until the **redemption** of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Romans 8:11:

“But if the **Spirit** of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your **mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

At home in the body and absent from the Lord

2 Corinthians 5:6, 7:

“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home **in the body** [while we live in this present, weak, temporal, corruptible tent] we are **absent** from the Lord [because we don’t have our future, heavenly, incorruptible, immortal building]. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

We must **walk by faith** in this life because we are physically **absent** from the Lord. However, when we receive our **heavenly building**, we will no longer need to walk by faith because we shall be physically **present with the Lord**.

Hebrews 11:1:

*“Faith is the substance of things **hoped for**, the evidence of things **not seen**.”*

Romans 8:24:

*“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is **seen** is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he **sees**?”*

The Problematic Text

Paul **desired** to be **absent** from the body (the present tent) and **present** with the Lord (in the future building) but he explicitly states that he did **not want** to be **unclothed** (to die). In other words, he desired **translation to heaven** without seeing death. Having carefully studied the context we can now understand the verse that most Christians use to teach the immortality of the soul. This is how they read the text:

2 Corinthians 5:8:

*“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather ***that our immortal soul*** be absent from the body and be present ***immediately after death*** with the Lord.”*

When did Paul Expect to be Present with the Lord?

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18:

*“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are **asleep**.¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God ***[at the second coming]*** and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up **together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And **thus we shall always be with the Lord**.¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*

Summary of Paul's Three Options

- ✓ Living in the present body [the tent] and absent from the Lord.
- ✓ The dead in Christ are naked or asleep [no tent or building].
- ✓ When Jesus comes, the living and the dead will be absent from the body [tent] and present with the Lord [in the building].

The critical issue is to be well pleasing to Jesus

The apostle Paul had a practical reason for writing this passage to the Corinthians. His point was that whether we live now in the tent or later in the building, we should please the Lord:

2 Corinthians 5:9

"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him."

All Must Appear

We must live a life pleasing to God because we will all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to render an account of whether we pleased Him or not. In Paul's writings, the judgment was always a future event on a certain day. The judgment does not take place the moment a person dies.

2 Corinthians 5:10:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body [the tent], according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Acts 17:31:

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge

***the world** in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*

Assurance of life even now

The Bible teaches that we can have the guarantee of eternal life even now:

John 5:24:

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me **has** everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but **has passed** from death into life."*

John 6:40:

*"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may **have everlasting life**; and I will raise him up at **the last day**."*

1 John 5:11, 12:

*"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is **in His Son**.¹² He who **has the Son** has life; he who **does not have the Son** of God does not have life."*

John 11:25, 26:

*"Jesus said to her [to Mary], "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he **shall live**."²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall **never die**. Do you believe this?"*



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #5 – PAUL’S DILEMMA: STAY OR DEPART?

Introduction

Another passage that Christians frequently use in an attempt to prove that man has an immortal soul is Philippians 1:21-24. However, a careful study of these verses reveals that the attempt is a case of eisegesis:

Philippians 1:21-24:

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh [in the tent], this will mean fruit from my labor [do what is pleasing]; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard pressed between the two [living in the tent or dying], having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better [than the other two options]. ²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

Historical Context

Paul wrote Philippians during his first imprisonment in Rome. At this point, Paul was not sure what was going to happen to him. He wondered whether he would die at the hand of the Romans or they release him and allow him to live.

The very book of Philippians indicates that Paul wrote this book while he was a prisoner in Rome:

Philippians 1:7, 13, 14:

*“... just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in **my chains** and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole **palace guard**, and to all the rest, that **my chains** are in Christ; ¹⁴ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by **my chains**, are much bolder to speak the word without fear.”*

Paul's Earnest Expectation and Hope

Paul's earnest expectation and hope was for Christ to be magnified in his body whether in life or in death:

Philippians 1:20:

*“... according to my **earnest expectation** [*apokaradokía: eager anticipation*] and **hope** that in nothing I shall be **ashamed**, but with all **boldness**, as always, so now also Christ will be **magnified in my body**, whether by **life** or by **death**.”*

Romans 8:19-23 proves that Paul's earnest expectation and hope was not to die and immediately go to heaven but rather the redemption of his body at the second coming:

Romans 8:19-23:

*“For the **earnest expectation** [*apokaradokía: eager anticipation*] of the creation **eagerly waits** for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in **hope**; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be **delivered from the bondage** of corruption into the **glorious liberty** of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation **groans and labors** with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even **we ourselves groan** within ourselves, **eagerly waiting** for the adoption, the **redemption of our body**.”*

Paul's Desire to Glorify God

Whether by life in the body or by death of the body, Paul's desire was to glorify God. He could glorify God by in the body because he would preach the gospel and many souls would be converted to the truth. In what sense would Paul glorify God by the death of the body? The answer is, by suffering the death of a martyr. We must remember that the word 'martyr' in Greek means 'witness'.

The Romans crucified Peter with his head down and by his death as a martyr he glorified God:

John 21:18, 19:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." ¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God and when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'

Stephen died as a martyr or witness and thus glorified God:

Acts 7:59, 60:

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was due to a great degree by the constancy and serenity of Stephen as the mob was stoning him to death! Thus, Stephen, by his death, saved souls! Notably, the apostle Paul later referred to Stephen as a martyr or witness:

Acts 22:20-21:

*"And when the blood of Your **martyr Stephen** was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him."*

*"The martyrdom of Stephen made a **deep impression** upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet of God **upon his face**; his **words**, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, **remained in the minds** of the beholders, and **testified to the truth** of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the **conviction of Saul**, who could **not efface from his memory** the faith and constancy of **the martyr**, and the glory that had rested on his countenance." Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 101*

To Die is Gain

Philippians 1:21:

*"For to me to **live** is Christ and to **die** is gain."*

Paul was **not afraid of dying**. What did he mean when he stated that 'to die is gain'? Was it because his soul would fly off to heaven the moment he died?

The book of Revelation explains that those who die in the Lord "*rest from their labors*":

Revelation 14:13:

*"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest from their labors**, and their works follow them."*

The word 'labor' in this verse does not refer simply **to work**. The Greek word **kópos** means, 'exacting labor' 'trouble', 'toil' 'hardship' 'difficult labor', 'exhausting labor'. Paul uses the word to refer to his **hard missionary labors** (2 Corinthians 11:23, 27).

2 Corinthians 11:23-28:

*“Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool—I am more: in **labors** [same word as **Revelation 14:13**] more abundant, in **stripes** above measure, in **prisons** more frequently, in **deaths** often. ²⁴ From the Jews **five times** I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵ **Three times** I was beaten with rods; **once** I was stoned; **three times** I was shipwrecked; **a night and a day** I have been in the deep; ²⁶ in **journeys** often, in **perils** of waters, in **perils** of robbers, in **perils** of my own countrymen, in **perils** of the Gentiles, in **perils** in the city, in **perils** in the wilderness, in **perils** in the sea, in **perils** among false brethren; ²⁷ in **weariness** and **toil** [same word as **Revelation 14:13**], in **sleeplessness** often, in **hunger** and **thirst**, in **fastings** often, in **cold and nakedness** ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern **for all the churches.**”*

To Live in the Flesh

Paul realized that if he remained alive he could witness to many people and see the fruit of his labors:

Philippians 1:22:

*“But if I live on **in the flesh**, this will mean **fruit** from my **labor.** . .”*

What did Paul mean when he referred to living in the flesh? Did mean that after he died, he **would not have flesh** but rather would be an intangible spirit? No. 1 Corinthians 15:50 provides the answer:

1 Corinthians 15:50:

*“Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood** cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does **corruption inherit incorruption.**”*

The synonymous parallelism in this verse indicates that ‘flesh and blood’ refers to our present corruptible body and ‘incorruption’ refers to our future incorruptible body. The succeeding verses (51-55) make this clear by stating

that ‘flesh and blood’ and ‘corruption’ refer to the body in its **present sinful state**. In heaven, we will have a **spiritual body** not infected by corruption and mortality, but it will **still be a body**.

*“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be **raised incorruptible**, and we shall be changed.⁵³ For this **corruptible** must put on **incorruption**, and this **mortal** must put on **immortality**.⁵⁴ So when this **corruptible** has put on **incorruption**, and this **mortal** has put on **immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”⁵⁵ “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”*

When the book of Hebrews refers to the earthly sojourn of Christ as ‘the days of His flesh’, it means his earthly mortal body.

Hebrews 5:7:

*“. . . who, in the **days of His flesh**, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear. . .”*

The expression ‘flesh and blood’ refers to the body of our present earthly existence:

Hebrews 2:14:

*“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of **flesh and blood**, He Himself likewise shared in **the same**, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”*

After the resurrection, Jesus still had a body of flesh and bones but it was immortal and incorruptible:

Luke 24:39:

*“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh and bones** as you see I have.””*

When the righteous resurrect they will have a real glorified body not subject to corruption and death:

1 Corinthians 15:42-44:

*“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The **body** is sown in **corruption**, it is raised in **incorruption**.⁴³ It is sown in **dishonor**, it is raised in **glory**. It is sown in **weakness**, it is raised in **power**.⁴⁴ It is sown a **natural body**, it is raised a **spiritual body**. There is a **natural body**, and there is a **spiritual body**.”*

The bodies of the redeemed will be like the glorified body of Jesus:

Philippians 3:20-21:

*“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform **our lowly body** that it may be conformed to **His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

Ellen G. White on the Spiritual Body:

*“Paul illustrates this subject by the **kernel of grain** sown in the field. The planted kernel **decays**, but there comes forth a **new kernel**. The **natural substance** in the grain that decays is never raised as before, but God **giveth it a body** as it hath pleased Him. A **much finer material** will compose the **human body**, for it is a new creation, a new birth. It is sown a **natural body**, it is raised a **spiritual body**.”*
Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 301.

The Fruit of Paul's Labor

Paul predicted that if he remained alive, his ministry would bear fruit:

Philippians 1:22:

*“But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean **fruit** from my **labor**. . .”*

When the apostle Paul affirmed that his labor would bear fruit, he was referring to the salvation of souls:

Colossians 1:6, NIV:

*“All over the world **this gospel is bearing fruit** and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you **heard it** and understood **God's grace** in all its truth.”*

Jesus announced that His death would bear much fruit:

John 12:24:

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a **grain of wheat** falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces **much grain** [**karpós: fruit**].”*

Paul was between a rock and a hard place where he had to make a tough choice. Up to this point, **two options** confronted the apostle: To **live in the flesh** and **produce fruit** or **die**. However, in the next verse a third option comes to view.

Paul's Third Option

Philippians 1:22, 23:

*“... yet what **I shall choose** I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard pressed [**I am torn**] between **the two** [**living in the flesh or dying**], having a desire **to depart** [**a third option**] and be with Christ, which is **far better** [**far better than dying or staying in the flesh**].”*

For Paul there is a third option that is much better than the first two. He does not want to be ‘naked’ but rather further clothed upon. His labors have exhausted him. He is in prison. However, there is a **third option** that is **far**

better than **living in the flesh** or **dying**. The third option is **to depart** and be with Christ.

Paul did **not write**:

*"I wish my immortal **soul could depart** from my body to be with **Christ immediately** at the **very moment** of my death."*

When did Paul expect to be with Jesus?

Did Paul teach anywhere in his writings that his great desire was for his soul to depart his body at death? Absolutely not! Paul expected to be with the Lord at the resurrection of the dead:

Philippians 3:10, 11:

*"... that I may know Him and the **power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the **resurrection from the dead**."*

1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14:

*"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus **died** and **rose again**, even so **God [the Father]** will bring **[to heaven] with Him [with Jesus]** those who sleep in Jesus."*

"The reference is not to disembodied souls, but to the sleeping bodies. The facts of Christ's experience are repeated in the believer's. He died and then rose; so believers shall die, then rise with Him." Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997-2014 by Biblesoft, Inc.

*"This **does not mean** that God will bring them with him from heaven when the Savior comes-though it will be true that their spirits will descend with the Savior; but it means that he will bring them from their graves, and will conduct them with*

him to glory, to be with him; compare notes, John 14:3. The declaration, as it seems to me, is designed to teach the general truth that the redeemed are so united with Christ that they shall share the same destiny as he does." Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997-2014 by BibleSoft, Inc.

The experience of Jesus:

- ✓ Jesus **died**
- ✓ Jesus **resurrected**
- ✓ The **angels brought** Jesus up to His Father's house

The experience of the righteous:

- ✓ The righteous **died**
- ✓ The righteous **resurrected**
- ✓ Jesus and the angels bring the righteous up to the **Father's house**

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by **no means precede** those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will **descend** from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

John 14:1-3:

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² **In My Father's house** are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go** to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I **go and prepare a place for you**, I will come again and **receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Paul's view is clear: The righteous dead and the righteous living go to the Father's house in **heaven at the same time**—at the **second coming**!

Paul's Uniform Perspective:

- ✓ **2 Corinthians 5:** Alive, naked, translated
- ✓ **1 Thessalonians 4:** Alive, asleep, translated
- ✓ **Philippians 1:** Alive, dead, translated

Paul's Hope

Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his **second imprisonment** in **Rome**. At this point he was certain that he was going suffer the death of a **martyr**. However, he was equally sure that Jesus would give him a crown **at the resurrection**.

2 Timothy 4:6-8:

*"For I am already being poured out as a **drink offering**, and the time of my **departure [where to?]** is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is **laid up for me [where?]** the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me **on that Day, [when?]** and not to me only but also to all who have loved **His appearing [when?]**."*

1 John 3:2:

*"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has **not yet** been revealed what we shall be, but we know that **when He is revealed**, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."*

While he was in prison, Paul has struggled with what would be best, to live or to die and rest from his hard labors. Then a third option comes to mind, and that is, translation without seeing death! He reaches the conclusion that translation would be far better than the two other options. However, Paul was

not selfish. He ends the passage by telling the Philippians that for their sakes it would be better to remain in the flesh.

Philippians 1:24:

*“Nevertheless to **remain in the flesh** is more needful **for you.**”*

Paul was saying that as far as he was concerned, he would rather rest in the grave or go to heaven alive but for the benefit of the Philippians, it was best for him to remain in the flesh.



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #6 – THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR

Introduction

Revelation 6:9-11 is one of those Misinterpreted passages that Protestants have used to ‘prove’ that the soul lives independently of the body after death:

Revelation 6:9-11:

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ ¹¹ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

The standard interpretation of this passage by Protestants is described by the Presbyterian commentator, **Albert Barnes**:

“This is one of the incidental proofs in the Bible that the soul does not cease to exist at death, and also that it does not cease to be conscious, or does not sleep until the resurrection. These souls of the martyrs are represented as still in existence; as remembering what had occurred on the earth; as interested in

what was now taking place; as **engaged in prayer**; and as manifesting earnest desires for the divine interposition to avenge the wrongs which they had suffered.”
Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997-2014 by Biblesoft, Inc.

The Historical Context of the Fifth Seal

In order to understand this controversial passage, we need to comprehend first the sequence of the first four seals of Revelation.

- ✓ The **white horse**: The pure Apostolic Church (first century).
- ✓ The **red horse**: The imperial persecutions (second and third centuries).
- ✓ **The black horse**: Apostasy enters the church in the days of Constantine (fourth and fifth centuries).
- ✓ **Pale horse**: Death and the grave for the martyrs under papal rule (1260 years).
- ✓ **Fifth seal**: The blood of the martyrs who died during the 1260 years cries out for a just judgment and vengeance.

Important Questions

- ✓ **When** do the martyrs cry out for justice and vengeance?
- ✓ Under which **altar** do these souls cry out?
- ✓ Why were they martyred?
- ✓ What do the **white robes** given to the first group of martyrs represent?
- ✓ Why did a voice tell the martyrs to **rest** for a season?
- ✓ When will the **second group** suffer martyrdom?
- ✓ **When** does God answer the pleas of all the martyrs?

The Old Testament Background: Cain and Abel

Unrighteous Cain and righteous Abel both built an altar and brought an offering and placed it on the altar:

Genesis 4:3, 4:

“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,”

Cain and Abel both built an altar and placed an offering on it. In obedience to God, Abel offered an animal sacrifice as God commanded. However, we are told about Cain:

“He obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but it was only a partial obedience. The essential part, the recognition of the need of a Redeemer, was left out.” Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, December 23, 1886

While the Lord accepted Abel’s offering by consuming the victim, He rejected Cain’s offering by not consuming it:

“Fire flashed from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. But Cain, disregarding the Lord’s direct and explicit command, presented only an offering of fruit. There was no token from heaven to show that it was accepted.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71

Abel’s offering was righteous:

Hebrews 11:4:

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”

Cain's offering was **wicked**:

1 John 3:12-13:

*"... not as Cain who was of the **wicked one** and murdered his brother. Why did he murder him? Because his **works were evil** and his brother's **righteous**."*

In a rage, Cain slew his brother:

Genesis 4:8:

*"Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and **killed him**."*

God then confronted Cain telling him that his brother's blood was crying out from the ground:

Genesis 4:10:

*"And He said, "What have you done? The **voice of your brother's blood cries out** to Me from the **ground**."*

How can the blood of a dead person speak? The answer is that a **great** injustice had been committed. The righteous died and the wicked lived! For this reason, the blood of Abel symbolically cried out for a **righteous judgment** and **vindication**. To human sight, evil won and righteousness lost and therefore this situation needed to be **rectified** by God's just judgment.

It was not the disincarnated soul of Abel that cried out but rather his blood. As we noted in lecture #2, the blood is the life or soul of the person. In Leviticus 17:11 the word *nephesh* appears three times. In the NKJV, the first time it is translated 'life' and the other two times 'soul'. Thus, the blood or soul/life of Abel symbolically cried out from the ground for justice and vengeance.

Leviticus 17:11:

“For the life [nephesh] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your [nephesh] souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the [nephesh] soul.”

Further Old Testament Background: The Blood under the Altar

There were **two altars** in the Hebrew sanctuary: The altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense. Which of the two altars is the one in view in Revelation 6:9-11? Let us take a closer look at the Old Testament **sacrificial service** to answer this question.

In the Hebrew cultus, after the sacrificial victim had been killed, its blood was **poured out** on the **ground** at the **base of the altar** of sacrifice. The **altar of sacrifice** represents **Christ’s sacrifice on earth** so the souls under the altar in Revelation 6 must be symbolically be crying out on earth, not in heaven:

Leviticus 4:7:

““And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation: and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

It cannot be emphasized enough that the words ‘soul’ or ‘life’ and the word ‘**blood**’ are **interchangeable**. It is the same to say that the ‘**soul**’ or ‘**life**’ cried out as to say that the **blood cried out**.

Leviticus 17:11:

“For the life [nephesh] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

Deuteronomy 12:23:

“Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life [nephesh]; you may not eat the life [nephesh] with the meat.”

The First Stage of the Roman Catholic Papacy: Daniel 7

Revelation 6:9-11 describes **two periods** of persecution for the martyrs, one in the past and the other in the future. Let us consider the first past stage.

Daniel 7 portrays a sequence of powers that would rule the earth from the days of **Daniel** until the setting up of Christ’s **everlasting kingdom**:

- ✓ Babylon (605-539 BC)
- ✓ Medo Persia (539-331 BC)
- ✓ Greece (331-168 BC)
- ✓ Roman Empire (168 BC-476 AD)
- ✓ Divided Roman Empire (476–538 AD)
- ✓ **Little Horn** (538–1798 AD). The little horn killed the **first group** of martyrs during this period.

Daniel 7:21:

“I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them.”

Daniel 7:25:

“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”

- ✓ In the **heavenly judgment before** the second coming, the ‘judging’ stage in favor of the martyrs begins (Daniel 7:9, 10). This judgment rectifies the

unjust judgments the little horn pronounced and executed against the saints during the 1260 years.

- ✓ At the conclusion of the heavenly judgment **a verdict** is given in favor of the martyred saints and the little horn is **punished**. Thus the blood of the martyrs is avenged.

The Judgment Stage: Pre-Advent

Let's review the final two point in the prophetic chain above. After the little horn's 1260-year rule, the judgment stage of the fifth seal begins in heaven before the second coming:

Daniel 7:9, 10:

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the **Ancient of Days** was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The **court was seated**, and the books were opened."*

The Avenging Stage: The Seven Plagues

At the conclusion of the judgment stage, God will punish the little horn and the blood of both groups of martyrs will be avenged (Daniel 7:26, 27):

Daniel 7:26-27:

*'But the **court shall be seated** and they shall **take away his dominion**, to **consume and destroy** it forever. ²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be **given to the people**, the **saints of the Most High** [same phrase as in Daniel 7:25]. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'*

The First Stage of the Roman Catholic Papacy: Revelation 13

Revelation 13:1-10 covers the same historical period of Daniel 7 but adds two important details, the deadly wound and the healing of the wound:

Revelation 13:1-10:

"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon [with ten horns] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. ⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" ⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Here is a synthesis of the prophetic chain in Revelation 13:1-10:

- ✓ Babylon (605-539 BC)
- ✓ Medo Persia (539-331 BC)
- ✓ Greece (331-168 BC)
- ✓ Roman Empire (168 BC-476 AD)

- ✓ Divided Roman Empire (476–538 AD)
- ✓ Little Horn/Beast (538–1798 AD)
- ✓ **Deadly wound**/captivity of the papacy (1798)
- ✓ The **beginning of the judgment** in heaven before the second coming for the '**judging stage**' of the martyrs—Revelation 14:6, 7.
- ✓ **Healing** of the deadly wound and **second stage** of persecution.
- ✓ The **seven last plagues** are the **avenging stage** of the fifth seal. The **harlot's name** is Babylon the great (Revelation 17:5) and the seven plagues are **her plagues** (Revelation 18:6). When the plagues are over and God's people are in heaven, then God has **judged** the harlot and **avenged** the blood of the saints

Revelation 19:1, 2:

*"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! ² For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has **judged** the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has **avenged** on her **the blood** of His servants shed by her."*

The First Stage in the Seven Churches

Revelation 19:1, 2 makes clear that the harlot was the one who slew the first group of martyrs as well as the second, because the cry of the martyrs for God to 'judge' and 'avenge' their blood during the fifth seal is answered when the harlot is judged and their blood avenged in Revelation 19:1, 2. This makes it necessary to briefly review the first four churches of the book of Revelation.

According to conservative Bible scholars, the **first four churches** are parallel to the first four seals:

- ✓ **Ephesus**: The Apostolic Church.
- ✓ **Smyrna**: The church persecuted by the Roman emperors.
- ✓ **Pergamum**: The apostate church in the days of Constantine.
- ✓ **Thyatira**: The papal church during the 1260 years, the same period as the fifth seal.

Revelation 2:20-23:

*"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman **Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit **sexual immorality** and eat things sacrificed to **idols**.²¹ And I gave her **time** to repent of her **sexual immorality**, and she did not repent.²² Indeed I will cast her into a **sickbed**, and those who commit **adultery with her** into **great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds.²³ I will kill her **children** with death, and **all the churches** shall know that I am He who **searches** the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you **according to your works**."*

Jezebel was a harlot and she was immersed in witchcraft:

2 Kings 9:22:

*"Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" So he answered, "What peace, as long as the **harlotries** of your mother Jezebel and her **witchcraft** are so many?"*

Jezebel she the blood of the innocent prophets of the LORD:

1 Kings 18:4:

*"For so it was, while Jezebel **massacred** the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)"*

When Jezebel was pushed from the window and the dogs ate her, the blood of the martyrs was avenged:

2 Kings 9:7:

*"You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may **avenge the blood** of My servants the prophets, and the **blood of all** the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel."*

The Deadly Wound Ended the First Stage of Martyrs

At the conclusion of the 1260 years, the little horn/beast received a deadly wound with the sword and went into captivity:

Revelation 13:3:

*"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been **mortally wounded**."*

Revelation 13:10:

*"He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who **kills** with the **sword** must be **killed with the sword**. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."*

The **sword** that gave the papacy its deadly wound was the **civil power**:

Romans 13:1-4:

*"Let every soul be subject to the **governing authorities**. For there is no **authority** except from God, and the **authorities** that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the **authority** resists the ordinance of God and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For **rulers** are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the **authority**? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear **the sword** in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."*

Why hasn't the papacy had the power to persecute as she did in the past? Why is the papacy still under restraint? Why is her wound still festering?

Malachi Martin, **Jesuit** scholar and close friend of **Pope John Paul II** who wrote the best-selling book, **The Keys of this Blood** explained the reason in **1986**:

*"[For] **fifteen hundred years** and more, [papal] Rome had kept as **strong a hand** as possible in each local community around the wide world. By and large, and admitting some exceptions, that had been the **Roman view** [Ellen White calls it the 'Roman element' in *The Great Controversy*, p. 581] until **two hundred years of inactivity** had been **imposed** upon the papacy **by the major secular powers of the world.**"* Quoted in **Christianity Today** (November 21, 1986), p. 26.

There are **three main points** in this statement by Martin:

- The papacy kept as **strong hand** as possible in each local community around the wide world for **fifteen hundred years**.
- The papacy has been inactive for 200 years before 1986.
- The major **secular powers** of the world have **imposed** this restraint upon the Papacy.

What happened two hundred years before 1986? The answer is, the French Revolution (1789-1797). This cataclysmic event for the Papacy reached its climax when **General Berthier** took Pope Pius VI captive in 1798. The civil **sword of the state** that the papacy had used for over one thousand years turned against her and gave her the deadly wound. France emancipated herself from papal power establishing a free republic. As a result, **one nation after another** in the western hemisphere formed **democratic governments** that have not allowed the papacy to use them to accomplish her own ends. That is to say, the **secular governments** have kept the Papacy **restrained or in captivity**.

The French Revolution did much more than just deliver France from the iron fist of the Papacy. It actually led all the major secular powers of Europe within a **brief period** to proclaim their emancipation from papal dominance. As a result, nation after nation in Europe formed **democratic governments** that guaranteed **civil and religious liberty**. For this reason, Henry Edward Cardinal Manning in **1862** (even before Victor Emmanuel II confiscated the Papal States in 1870) lamented that the nations of Europe **had forsaken** the papacy:

*"See this Catholic Church, this Church of God, feeble and weak, rejected even by the **very nations called Catholic**. There is Catholic **France**, and Catholic **Germany**, and Catholic **Italy giving up** this exploded figment of the **temporal power** of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.' And so, because the Church **seems weak**, and the Vicar of the Son of God is renewing the Passion of his Master upon earth, therefore we are scandalized, therefore we **turn our faces from him**." (*The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ*, pp. 140, 141, emphasis mine)*

The First Group of Martyrs Rest

When the martyrs cried out for justice and vengeance, they were given white robes and told to rest for a little while until the rest of the martyrs died as they had:

Revelation 6:11:

*"Then a **white robe** was given to **each of them**; and it was said to them that they should **rest** a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be **killed as they were**, was completed."*

Revelation 14:13:

*"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are the **dead** who **die** in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest** from their **labors**, and their **works follow them**."*

A question for those who believe in the immortality of the soul: If the souls of the first group of martyrs are resting, how can they be crying out in agony for justice and vengeance?

What are the White Robes?

The white robes represent the righteousness of Christ. The martyrs died in Christ, covered with the robe of His righteousness. The martyrs are thus receiving the assurance that they are secure and God will reverse their earthly sentence in the judgment and ultimately avenge them:

Revelation 7:13:

*"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of **the great tribulation**, and washed their **robes [stolé]** and made them **white** in the **blood of the Lamb**."*

Revelation 19:6-8:

*"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb** has come, and His wife has made herself ready." ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in **fine linen**, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the **righteous acts** of the saints."*

The Second Stage of the Roman Catholic Papacy

Revelation tells us that the papacy will resurrect from her deadly wound and behave once again as she did in the past. She will slay the second group of martyrs during the short time of trouble shortly before the close of probation:

Revelation 13:3

*"... and his deadly **wound was healed** and all the world marveled and followed the beast."*

Revelation 13:11, 12, 15: A **second beast** will help the first beast **recover** from its **deadly wound** and a **second stage** of persecution will ensue:

*“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. ¹² And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it **to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed**. ¹⁵ He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be **killed**.”*

Revelation 13:11-18 describes a beast that rises from the earth. This beast represents the **United States of America**. In the first stage of its existence, this nation guarantees full **civil and religious liberty**, separating church and state. However, at the end of its career it will do all in its power to **remove the restraint** from the papacy. It will do all in its power to please the first beast:

- ✓ It will exercise all the **authority** of the **first** beast.
- ✓ It will force the whole world to **worship** the **first** beast.
- ✓ It will do everything ‘**in the presence** of the **first** beast’ (NIV: ‘**on behalf** of the first beast; CEV: ‘it **worked for** the beast’; **lexicons**: ‘at the **commissioning** of the beast’).
- ✓ It will make an **image of** the **first** beast.
- ✓ The image will be **in honor** (**to** the beast) and whoever does not worship the image will be **sentenced to death**.
- ✓ It will enforce the **mark** of the **first** beast on pain of not being able to **buy or sell**.
- ✓ It will perform **signs and wonders** in the presence of the beast.

The Second Stage of the Martyrs

Revelation 17 describes the same harlot of the fourth church that will shed the blood of the martyrs once more as she did in the past:

Revelation 17:1, 6:

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot** who sits many waters. ⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the **blood of the saints** and with the **blood of the martyrs of Jesus**. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement."*

The seven plagues will be the avenging portion of the fifth seal. The harlot at this point has already been judged and sentenced in the heavenly court and the plagues will be the execution of the sentence.

Revelation 16:5, 6:

*"And I heard the angel of the waters saying: 'You are **righteous**, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You **have judged** these things. ⁶ For they have **shed the blood** of saints and prophets, and You have **given them blood to drink** for it is their **just due**."*

After God has judged and avenged the blood of both groups of martyrs God's people will sing a song of victory in heaven:

Revelation 19:1, 2: The **martyrs victorious** in heaven

*"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! ² For **true and righteous** are His judgments, because He **has judged** the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He **has avenged** on her the blood of His servants shed by her."*

During the thousand years those who were unjustly judged will become the judges of their tormentors:

Revelation 20:4:

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then **I saw the souls** of those who had been **beheaded** for their **witness** to Jesus and for the **word of God**, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived** and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”*



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #7 – THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN

The Passage

There is a passage in the book of Hebrews that seems to say that the spirits of just men are in heaven. The standard Protestant view is that these spirits are the disembodied spirits of the dead. We need to put this view to careful scrutiny by examining Hebrews 12:22-24.

The Historical Context

The apostle Paul is dealing with a specific problem in the book of Hebrews, Jews who are about to give up Christianity and return to what they considered to be the riches of Judaism. Their thinking was:

“Before becoming Christians we had the glorious city of Jerusalem with its resplendent temple, the priesthood, the Fathers, the covenants, the promises. What do we have now? Nothing but opposition and persecution!”

Paul attempted to show them that the old was good but that the new is so much better. Under the old system, individuals were saved by faith in the promised Messiah. Under the new system they were saved by faith in the Messiah who had come.

Basically, Paul was saying to the Hebrews:

*‘If you **go back to Judaism** you are actually going back to a system that could **not save the sinner** because the **blood of animals** and mere **human mediators** are powerless to save.’*

The Passage

Hebrews 12:22-24, NKJV

*“But you [the living Hebrews] **have come** [perfect active tense] [1] Mount Zion and [2] to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, [3] to an innumerable company of angels, [4] to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who **are** [‘who have been’: perfect passive tense] **registered** in heaven, [5] to God the Judge of all, [6] to the **spirits of just men** [‘who have been made perfect’: passive tense] **made perfect**, [7] to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and [8] to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than **that of** Abel.”*

Hebrews 12:22-24 (NIV):

*“But you [the living Hebrews] **have come** [perfect active; their initiative] to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You [the Hebrews] **have come** to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names **are** [‘have been’ perfect passive] written in heaven. You **have come** to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, [‘**that have been made**’] ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word **than the blood** [not in the Greek] of Abel.”*

The church of the firstborn was **not actually in heaven**, but rather were ‘registered’ in heaven: The identical word is *apographo* appears in **Luke 2:3, 5** where Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to **register their names** in the tax records.

In another text, Jesus told His disciples not to rejoice because the evil spirits were subject to them, but rather because their names were written in heaven:

Luke 10:20:

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written [have been written] in heaven."

Already and not yet

Evangelical scholar, **George Eldon Ladd** wrote a book titled, *The Presence of the Future* where he argued persuasively that Christians even now can spiritually enjoy the blessings of the future.

The people in the **Old Testament** dwelt in **earthly Jerusalem** with its **literal temple**, its **animal blood** and mere **human intercessors**.

However, in the **New Testament**, we are citizens of the **New Jerusalem** with its **heavenly temple** and we have the **blood of Jesus** who is an **everlasting intercessor**.

God **registered** the names of the great Old Testament heroes of Hebrews 11 in heaven **when they believed**. Although they were already dead when Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, Paul portrays them as **being present** in the heavenly Jerusalem, not in person but through the **record of their names**. In Hebrews 12:22 Paul added that those to whom he wrote his book joined the Old Testament saints in heaven, **not physically but spiritually**. This is why Paul wrote that we are even now, **seated with Christ** in heavenly places although we are physically on earth (Ephesians 2:6).

Notice that the passage does not say that the Hebrews to whom Paul wrote **would** come to mount Zion and the New Jerusalem in the future; it says that they **had** already come and yet they were still physically living on earth!

The **perfect tense** appears **three times** in the passage. The perfect tense is an action that began in the **past** and **endures to the present**. For example, when I say that ‘*I have been in Fresno for twenty-five years*’, the action began twenty-four years ago but still continues to this day because I am still in Fresno. Paul spoke of this another way when he wrote that although we are on earth, our citizenship is in heaven:

Philippians 3:20, 21:

*“For our **citizenship** is in heaven, from which we also **eagerly wait** for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. “*

We can presently drink the living **water** from the throne of God (John 4:13, 14), eat from the **tree of life**, partake of the **heavenly manna** (John 6) and come boldly to the **throne of grace** (Hebrews 4:15, 16) even though we now live on earth.

Ephesians 2:4-6:

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and **made us sit together in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus.”*

Ellen White beautifully explained the relationship between the heavenly and the earthly church:

*"The church of God below is **one** with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute **one church**. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints that meet on earth to worship God. In the **inner court** of heaven, they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the **outer court** on earth, and the praise and*

thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God." Ellen G. White, Counsels for the Church, pp. 240, 241

Three Important Questions about this Passage

- Who are the 'just men'?
- What are these 'spirits' of just men?
- In what sense were the spirits of these just men 'made perfect'?

The Classic Protestant View

The late Robert Morey in his book, Death and the Afterlife, p. 213 is quite certain that 'the spirits of just men' refers to the departed souls of the Old Testament saints:

"In this glorious picture described by the author, the earthly saints join in the worship which resounds from the myriads of angels and disembodied spirits of fellow saints who have departed this life. These saints were justified through faith while on earth and are now perfected and completed in heaven. That the author is describing the blest condition of departed saints who now worship God before the throne is so clear that we must agree with the commentators that it cannot be questioned or doubted. . . The conditionalists have never adequately dealt with the grammar and syntax of this passage, because the 'spirits of justified men now perfected' who are worshiping at God's throne are obviously conscious souls of believers during the intermediate state."

What are the “spirits”?

When a person is born, they begin to breathe and write their life history. Along with the power to breathe a person develops, during the course of a lifetime, a self-identity or **life record** that God keeps an **exact record** of in heaven:

*“Our **personal identity** is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The **spirit, the character of man**, returns to God, **there to be preserved**. In the resurrection, every man will have **his own character**. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature that shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him.” Ellen G. White, Maranatha, p. 301*

God also keeps a record of the lives of the wicked. Regarding the lost outside the New Jerusalem after the millennium, Ellen White wrote:

*“There are kings and generals who conquered nations, valiant men who never lost a battle, proud, ambitious warriors whose approach made kingdoms tremble. In death these experienced **no change**. As they come up from the grave, they **resume the current of their thoughts just where it ceased**. They are actuated by the same desire to conquer that ruled them when they fell.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 664*

God returns to the righteous and the wicked the character that they had while they were alive. In other words, the spirit is the breath along with the self-identity or life record.

Who are the Just Men?

The word 'men' is not in the Greek text. The Greek simply says, 'to the spirits of the righteous made perfect'. Hebrews 11 explains who these righteous people were and how they were 'made righteous'. The righteous made perfect are the honor roll of Old Testament heroes who died and are mentioned in Hebrews 11. The text tells us that they accomplished their feats 'by faith.' In fact, the word "faith" appears 24 times in Hebrews 11.

Among the notables on the honor roll are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. When Paul wrote, the heroes of faith were all dead.

Hebrews 11:4 actually refers to Abel as 'righteous'! Further, Hebrews 11:7 tells us that Noah became an heir of the 'righteousness that is by faith' and James informs us that Rahab the harlot was justified by a faith that works as was Abraham (James 2:23, 25).

Hebrews 11:33-38: Describes the trials that the Old Testament heroes went through and how their faith gave them the victory.

'The Meaning of 'made perfect' ('complete')

- We have seen that the 'spirit' describes the heavenly life record or character of a person written in heaven.
- Somehow, the life record of these righteous Old Testament heroes needed to be 'made perfect'.
- The question is how God made the life record of these Old Testament saints perfect.

The Perfecting of Jesus

In order to understand the meaning of the phrase ‘made perfect’ we need to consider the experience of Jesus because the expression ‘made perfect’ in Hebrews appears frequently in the context of His **mission** of Jesus:

Hebrews 2:10 tells us that Jesus was **made perfect** through **sufferings**:

Hebrews 2:10:

*“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to make** the captain of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**.”*

Once again, in Hebrews 5:7-9 we find that **Jesus was made perfect** by being obedient in His trials. Because He was made perfect he is the **author** of eternal salvation:

Hebrews 5:7-9:

*“... who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And **having been perfected [through His sufferings]**, He became the **author of eternal salvation** to all who obey Him.”*

Hebrews 7:28 explains that Jesus could be our **High Priest** because He was ‘**perfected**’:

Hebrews 7:28:

*“For the law appoints as high priests, men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been **perfected forever**.”*

The word 'perfect' in the case of Christ, does not refer to the **moral perfection of character**. The Old Testament sacrifices were **incomplete**—not perfect—in the sense that they **could not legally save** the sinner because the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). The word 'perfect' describes what Jesus needed to do in order to become our **complete Savior**. The suffering and death of Jesus **qualified** or 'perfected Him' to **save us from sin**.

Perfecting the Spirits

Hebrews 7-10 contrasts the old sacrificial system with the new. The old system could not legally 'perfect' the believer but the new can because the new system has 'better blood':

Hebrews 7:11, 19:

*"Therefore, if **perfection** were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹⁹ for the law **made nothing perfect**; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a **better hope**, through which **we draw near** to God."*

Hebrews 9:9-12:

*"It [**the old system**] was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which **cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience** ¹⁰ concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the **time of reformation**. ¹¹ **But** Christ came as High Priest of the **good things to come**, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place **once for all**, having obtained **eternal redemption**."*

Hebrews 10:1-4, 11, 12, 14, 18:

*“For the law, having a **shadow** of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those **who approach perfect**.² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, **once purified**, would have had **no more consciousness of sins**.³ But in those sacrifices there is a **reminder** of sins every year.⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could **take away sins**.”¹¹ “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can **never take away sins**.¹² But this Man, after He had **offered one sacrifice for sins forever**, sat down at the right hand of God,¹⁴ For by one offering He has **perfected forever** those who are being sanctified.¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, there is **no longer an offering for sin**.”*

The blood and priests of the old system could **not deal definitively** with sin because the routine was repeated every year and the blood of bulls and goats cannot remit sin. The apostle Paul in Romans put it a different way:

Romans 3:25, 26:

*“... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, **through faith**, to **demonstrate His righteousness**, because in His forbearance God had **passed over the sins that were previously committed**,²⁶ to **demonstrate** at the present time His righteousness, that He might be **just** and the **justifier** of the one who **has faith** in Jesus.”*

Colossians 2:14: The old system was a system of debt or **IOU'S** that Jesus paid by nailing them to the cross:

*“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,¹⁴ having wiped out the **handwriting of requirements that was against us**, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having **nailed it to the cross**.”*

The Sacrifice of Abel and the Sacrifice of Christ

Most Bible versions translate Hebrews 12:24 erroneously. They assume that the shed blood of Abel cries out for justice and the blood of Jesus is better because it provides justice. Here is an example from the NLT:

Hebrews 12:24:

"You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel."

The problem with this translation is that it adds words to the text that are not there. The words 'than the blood' are added by the translators. The text simply says:

Hebrews 12:24, KJV:

*"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than [**the blood of: not in the original**] Abel."*

Why is the blood of sprinkling of Christ better than the blood that Abel offered? Simply because the blood that Abel offered could not legally take away sin but the blood of Christ can! The text is not contrasting Abel's blood that Cain shed with the blood that Jesus shed. Rather, the blood of Abel's sacrifice is contrasted with the blood that Christ offered.

The noted commentator, **Albert Barnes**, described the contrast between the sacrifice of Abel and the Sacrifice of Christ. After saying that the Greek does not contain the words "*than the blood of*" he makes the following comment:

*"The meaning here is, that the blood of Jesus speaks better things than Abel did; that is, that the blood of Jesus is the 'reality' of which the offering of Abel was a 'type.' Abel proclaimed by the sacrifice which he made the great truth that salvation could be only by a bloody offering-but he did this only in a **typical and***

obscure manner; Jesus proclaimed it in a more distinct and better manner by the reality.”

Them and Us

All of these Old Testament heroes died without receiving the promised Messiah (Hebrews 11:39). That is to say, they were imperfect or incomplete because Jesus, the reality, had not yet come.

“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.”

However, Paul tells the Hebrews that God had given something better to them than to the Old Testament heroes. In fact, the Old Testament heroes could not be perfected without or apart from them.

Hebrews 10:40:

“God having provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

What is this something better that allowed the Old Testament heroes, along with the Hebrews of Paul’s day, to be perfected or qualified for salvation? The book of Hebrews provides the unequivocal answer. The Old Testament heroes lived in the period of shadows while the Hebrews lived in the time of the body or reality toward which those shadows pointed!

A real life Example

Moses is one of the major heroes mentioned in Hebrews 11. There are some odd details about the death of Moses. Deuteronomy tells us that God buried Moses and no one knew where his grave was. Both of these details are unusual:

Deuteronomy 34:5, 6:

*"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. ⁶ And **He buried him** in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but **no one knows** his grave to this day."*

After God buried Moses, a dispute ensued at the gravesite between Michael and the devil

Jude 9:

*"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he **disputed about the body of Moses**, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said," *The Lord rebuke you!"**

What was the **dispute** all about? Do Jesus and Satan **fight over corpses**? Of course not; there is something deeper here. Basically Satan was saying:

Moses sinned when he killed the Egyptian and when he struck the rock twice and the wages of sin is death from which there is no resurrection. Therefore, Moses is mine.

The dispute was over Michael's right to resurrect Moses (1 Thessalonians 4 tells us that the Archangel resurrects the dead) because the price for his forgiveness had not yet been legally paid. Moses had not yet been 'made perfect'. We know that Moses resurrected because he later appeared to Jesus on the Mount of the Transfiguration and encouraged Jesus to go ahead with the plan to die and save man from sin:

Luke 9:30, 31:

*"As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His **decease** which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."*

In the Old Testament period, Moses experienced salvation only because of **the promise** of the coming Redeemer. Satan argued that Christ had not yet paid the **price of redemption** and therefore Moses was rightfully his. Moses resurrected and went to heaven only because of **the promise**. In this sense, Moses was a brand plucked from the fire (see the parallel in Zechariah 3:2).

"Moses passed through death, but Michael came down and gave him life before his body had seen corruption. Satan tried to hold the body, claiming it as his; but Michael resurrected Moses and took him to heaven. Satan railed bitterly against God, denouncing Him as unjust in permitting his prey to be taken from him; but Christ did not rebuke His adversary, though it was through his temptation that the servant of God had fallen. He meekly referred him to His Father, saying, "The Lord rebuke thee." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 164

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with **the voice of an archangel**, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #8 – PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

Introduction

One of the favorite passages that Protestants use in an attempt to ‘prove’ the immortality of the soul is 1 Peter 3:18-22. Supposedly, while Jesus was dead, His Spirit left the body and went to preach the gospel to the spirits of human beings who died during the flood. Let’s study the controversial passage in the *New King James Version* to see if this understanding is correct:

1 Peter 3:18-22:

*“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put **to death in the flesh** but **made alive by the Spirit**,¹⁹ by whom also He **went** and **preached** to the **spirits** in **prison**,²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.²¹ There is also an **antitype** which now saves us—**baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the **resurrection of Jesus Christ**,²² who has **gone** into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been **made subject** to Him.”*

For Church Members

Before we delve into the passage we need to remember that the apostles wrote their letters to **church members**, not to **theologians**. The purpose of their epistles was **practical**. They wished to teach the church members how to have **assurance** in the Christian life in the midst of great **trials and suffering**.

1 Peter 1:1, 2:

*“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the **pilgrims of the Dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”*

A common misunderstanding of 1 Peter 3:18

As mentioned before, here is how some Christians interpret this passage:

*“While the **body of Jesus** was dead, **His disembodied spirit went down to hell** and preached the **good news of salvation** to the **spirits of dead people** who disobeyed at the time of the flood in order to give them a **second chance** to be saved.”*

One of the favorite passages that Protestants use in an attempt to ‘prove’ the immortality of the soul is 1 Peter 3:18-22. Supposedly, while Jesus was dead, His Spirit left the body and went to preach to the spirits of human beings who died during the flood. For example, the ***Living Bible*** paraphrases verses 18 and 19 in the following manner:

*“But though his **body died**, his **spirit lived on**, ¹⁹ and it was **in the spirit** that he visited the spirits in prison and preached to them.”*

The *Message Version* gives the verses a similar gist:

“He went and proclaimed God's salvation to earlier generations who ended up in the prison of judgment ²⁰ because they wouldn't listen.”

The Bible Corrects the Misconceptions

There are several reasons why this interpretation is wrong:

- ✓ The Bible teaches that there will be **no second chance**. This lifetime is given to us to repent and receive Christ:

Hebrews 9:27:

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

- ✓ The **Bible says**: “**Today**, if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts” (see Hebrews 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).
- ✓ If Jesus gave the **antediluvians** a **second chance** to be saved after Jesus died, then why not give **everyone else** a second chance as well?
- ✓ The Bible clearly states that the dead **know nothing**

Ecclesiastes 9:5:

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

- ✓ The book of Genesis tells us that the **moral condition** of the antediluvians was **irreversible**.

Genesis 6:5:

*“Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness** of man was **great** in the earth, and that **every** intent of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually**.”*

The Structure of Verse 18

1 Peter 3:18:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

The structure of verse 18:

- ‘Jesus suffered once for sins. . .’
- ‘that He might bring us to God’
- Being ‘put to death in the flesh’
- but ‘made alive by [in] the Spirit’

Death in the Flesh

The expression ‘put to death in the flesh’ refers to Jesus death on the cross:

Hebrews 5:7:

“... who, in the days of His flesh [while He was in his mortal body], when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.”

Made alive in the Spirit

The Greek word translated ‘made alive’, appears 11 times in the New Testament and in every case, without exception, it refers to the resurrection (see 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; 2 Corinthians 3:6). John 5:21 uses the word twice (see also the other occurrences of the word in John 6:63; Romans 4:17; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 36, 45; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:21):

John 5:21:

*“For as the Father raises the dead and **gives life** to them, even so the Son **gives life** to whom He will.”*

The noted Presbyterian commentator **Albert Barnes** wrote about the meaning of the expression ‘made alive’:

*“The sense, then, cannot be that, in reference to his soul or spirit, he was preserved alive when his body died, but that there was some agency or power **restoring him to life**, or **reanimating** him **after** he was dead.”* (From *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc.

When our text states that Jesus was ‘**put to death in the flesh**’ it simply means that his **natural human body** died. ‘**Made alive in the Spirit**’ means that He received his **resurrected body** by the work of His Father through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Father prepared His incarnation body and the Father prepared His resurrection body. Paul referred to the present body and the future body as the ‘natural body’ and the ‘spiritual body’:

1 Corinthians 15:42-44:

*“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a **natural body**, it is raised a **spiritual body**. There is a **natural** body, and there is a **spiritual** body.”*

The Grammar of 1 Peter 3:19

1 Peter 3:19:

*“... by whom **[in which condition or state]** also He went and preached to the spirits in prison.”*

The preposition 'by which' in the New King James Version can also legitimately be translated 'in which'. Several Bible versions translate 'in which' and the Complete Jewish Bible translates 'in this form'.

In this verse, there is an **agreement** between the nouns 'flesh' and 'spirit' and the preposition 'in' and the relative pronoun 'which'. All of these are in the **dative case**:

- 'in the flesh' (dative case) '*en sarki*'
- 'in the Spirit' (dative case) '*en pneumatī*'
- 'in which' (dative case) '*en ho*'

This means is that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison **after his death and resurrection** and not between His death and His resurrection.

Where did Jesus Go?

1 Peter 3:19:

"He **went** . . ."

Where did Jesus go after he resurrected from the dead? Did he go **up** to heaven or **down** to hell where the purported spirits of the antediluvians were? Verse 19 does **not tell us** in which direction Jesus went. Those who believe in the immortality of the soul generally **assume** that He went down. However, the word '**went**' (*poreutheis*) in the Greek can refer to going **up**, **down** or **horizontally**.

Where did Jesus go after His death and resurrection? Other Scriptures as well as the succeeding context indicate that He **went up**. Here is one example where the word is used for ascent rather than descent.

Acts 1:10:

*“And while they looked steadfastly toward **heaven** as He **went up [poreutheis]**, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.”*

The succeeding context indicates that Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection proclaiming His victory over angels and authorities and powers:

1 Peter 3:21, 22:

*“... through the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ, ²² who has **gone [poreutheis]** into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”*

What does Preach Mean?

The word ‘**preached**’ (*kerusso*) does not only refer to preaching the good news of the gospel. It can also mean ‘**proclaimed**,’ or ‘**announced**.’ It means to “**make known by a herald**”. The **NASB** translates the word ‘preached’ as ‘made a proclamation’ and the **ESV** ‘proclaimed’.

Albert Barnes explains the meaning of the word:

*“The word used here *ekeeruxen* is of a general character, meaning to make a **proclamation** of any kind, as a **crier does**, or to deliver a message, and does not necessarily imply that it was the gospel which was preached, nor does it determine anything in regard to the **nature of the message**.” *Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblossoft, Inc.)**

Revelation 5:2:

*“Then I saw a strong angel **proclaiming** with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”*

Luke 8:39:

*"Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and **proclaimed** throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him."*

Who are the Spirits in Prison?

In a **negative sense**, 'spirits' in the Bible refer to Satan and his angels. During His ministry, Jesus constantly referred to evil angels as 'spirits'. The combination of 'spirits' and 'chains' or 'prison' always refers to fallen angels.

When Jesus sent out the **seventy** to preach the gospel, the spirits were subject to them:

Luke 10:20:

*"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the **spirits** are **subject** to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

Jesus referred to Satan's angels as unclean and wicked spirits:

Luke 11:24-26:

*"When an unclean **spirit** goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then he goes and takes with him seven other **spirits** more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."*

The unclean spirits obeyed the authority of Christ:

Mark 1:27-28:

*"Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with **authority** He commands even the **unclean spirits**, and they **obey** Him.'"*

Revelation 20 describes how the angel from heaven confines Satan to the abyss and shuts him up in prison:

Revelation 20:1, 3:

*“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the **bottomless pit** and a great **chain** in his hand. ³ And he cast him [**the devil**] into the **bottomless pit [abyss]**, and **shut him up**, and set a **seal on him**, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be **released** for a little while.”*

The word ‘**prison**’ appears in **Revelation 20:7** and refers to the incarceration of Satan during the thousand years. Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2 also describe the fallen angels as being confined in chains:

Jude 6:

*“And **the angels** who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in **everlasting chains** under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”*

2 Peter 2:4:

*“For if God did not spare the **angels** who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into **chains [tártaros] of darkness**, to be reserved for judgment.”*

Jesus Proclaimed His Victory

1 Peter 3:22:

*“... who has **gone [poreutheis]** into heaven and is at the right hand of God, **angels** and **authorities** and **powers** having been **made** subject to Him.”*

Jesus came to **bind Satan** so that He could plunder his house:

Matthew 12:28-29:

*"But if I cast out demons by the **Spirit of God**, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can one enter a strong man's house and **plunder his goods**, [Satan's goods are his followers] unless he first **binds** the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."*

Ellen White comments:

*"Then it is that the Stronger than the strong man armed, is the helper of the soul, and the poor captive is strengthened by the Holy Spirit to obtain his freedom."
Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 299.*

John 12:30, 31:

*"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be **cast out**. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. " This he said, signifying what death he should die."*

Jesus promised the 70 that they would have all power over the enemy:

Luke 10:18-20:

*"And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the **authority** to trample on **serpents and scorpions**, and over **all the power of the enemy**, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

The last three words of Jesus on the cross:

- 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'
- 'It is finished.'
- 'Into Your hands I commend my spirit.'

This was the hour of the **powers of darkness** (Luke 22:53). Satan seemed in control. Evil spirits disguised as men were present throughout the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. However, when Jesus resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven, he proclaimed His victory over the forces of darkness:

***"Hosts of evil angels** were gathered about the place **[the tomb of Jesus]**." The earth trembles at his approach, the **hosts of darkness flee**, and as he rolls away the stone, heaven seems to come down to the earth. The soldiers see him removing the stone as he would a pebble, and hear him cry, Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee. They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the rent sepulcher, **"I am the resurrection, and the life."** Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 780.*

It is important to remember that the word 'went' in verse 19 and the word 'gone' in verse 22 are the identical Greek word.

Colossians 2:14, 15:

*"And you, being **dead** in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has **made alive together** with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to **the cross**. ¹⁵ Having **disarmed principalities** and **powers**, He made a **public spectacle** of them, **triumphing** over them in it **[His cross]**."*

Romans 8:38, 39: Nothing will be able to **separate us** from Jesus:

*"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor **angels** nor **principalities** nor **powers**, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to **separate us** from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Ephesians 6:12:

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers** of the **darkness of this age**, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the **heavenly places**.”*

Ephesians 4:8-10: Jesus descended and then ascended:

*“Therefore He says: “When He **ascended on high**, He led **captivity captive** [Matthew 27:51-53], and gave gifts to men.” ⁹ (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the **lower parts of the earth**? ¹⁰ He who **descended** is also the One who **ascended far above all the heavens**, that He might fill all things.)”*

The same movement downward followed by a movement upward is in **Philippians 2:6-11:**

In summary

Jesus was **baptized** into death and then **resurrected** from the dead proclaiming His victory over the grave. He then ascended on high proclaiming His victory over Satan and his angels.

Sharing His Experience in Baptism

Ephesians 2:4-6: At baptism, we share in Christ’s experience:

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were **dead** in trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and **raised us up** together, and **made us sit** together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 6:3, 5:

*"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into **His death**? ⁵ For if we have been united together in the **likeness of His death**, certainly we also shall be in the **likeness of His resurrection**."*

Peter's Audience

The word '**for**' in **verse 18** connects with the previous context. What was the problem Peter was addressing? The answer is in verses 13-17:

1 Peter 3:13-17:

*"And who is he **who will harm you** if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even **if you should suffer** for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And **do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled**." ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when **they defame you as evildoers**, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is the will of God, **to suffer** for doing good than for doing evil."*

The people to whom Peter wrote were **suffering reproach**. They became Christians through baptism and they were having second thoughts about whether it was **worthwhile** to be Christians.

Peter used the story of **Noah as an example** to encourage them. Noah's enemies oppressed him but he passed **through the waters**, the waters buried his old life and he came forth on the other side of the flood to a cleansed world. Furthermore, Satan and his angels were bound because all of their followers were buried in the waters.

Jesus went through the **same experience**. Satan and His enemies oppressed Him. He **suffered in the flesh** and was **baptized into death**. However, after His burial in the 'waters' of death, he **resurrected and ascended on high**

disarming the very powers that had caused His grief. As he came forth from the grave and **ascended to heaven**, He proclaimed His **victory** over these powers of evil while the **entire universe rejoiced**.

Peter then encouraged the Christians of his day telling them that when they were baptized **they shared in Christ's victory** because God looked at them as being included in Him.

1 Peter 4:12, 13:

*"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ **but** rejoice to the extent that you **partake of Christ's** sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be **glad with exceeding joy.**"*



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LESSON #9 – THREE INSEPARABLE DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

Introduction

Three Bible doctrines are closely related and we must study them together. If we misunderstand one, we will also get the others wrong. The doctrines are:

- ✓ The state of the dead
- ✓ The investigative judgment
- ✓ The second coming of Jesus.

The Origin of Man

The book of Genesis tells us that Adam was a soul composed of body and breath:

Genesis 2:7:

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

The physical body was composed of potter's clay:

Isaiah 64:8:

"But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."

- God formed the material body with all its organs and systems.
- However, the physical organism was lifeless.
- God infused into the nostrils of the body the breath of life (power source).
- All the organs and systems began to fulfill their function.
- The brain was the processor that recorded and classified all that came through the five senses.
- From his first breath, Adam began forming his life history or self-identity by what came into his brain through his five senses.
- When Adam died at 930 years of age, his self-identity or biographical record was complete.

What Happened to Adam at Death?

The process of death is the opposite of the process of creation:

Ecclesiastes 12:7:

"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."

- The breath of life leaves the body.
- The body with all its organs and systems ceases to function.
- The body eventually returns to dust.
- The brain no longer processes anything because the five senses are no longer able to receive and process input.

Psalm 146:3-4:

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. ⁴ His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

Ecclesiastes 9:5:

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

Ecclesiastes 9:10:

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

The Critical Question

When Adam died, his self-identity, biography or life record of 930 years that he inputted into his brain disintegrated along with his brain. This sounds somewhat fatalistic, does it not? However, there is more to the story!

The Content of the Books (Plural)

In the Bible, the heavenly record books (plural) God has stored an exact and complete written (electronic?) transcript of Adam's life. That is to say, the books contain a complete biography including actions, motives, words, feelings, emotions, secrets and thoughts. Let us notice in several Bible texts that describe what the books contain.

Daniel 7 describes the beginning of the judgment when the life records in the books will be reviewed:

Daniel 7:9-10:

"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne

was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The **court was seated**, and the **books were opened**."

The books contain a record of our **actions**:

2 Corinthians 5:10:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the **things done in the body**, according to what he has done, whether **good or bad**."

The books contain a complete record of our **words**:

Matthew 12:36-37:

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they **will give account** of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your **words** you will be justified, and by your **words** you will be condemned."

The books contain a record of our works and **secret things**:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:

"Fear God and keep His Commandments, for this is man's all. ¹⁴ For God will bring **every work** into judgment, including every **secret thing**, whether **good or evil**."

Human beings are writing the personal life record on earth in human flesh, but in **heaven** God keeps an exact transcript of their life record in **books**. As mentioned before, the heavenly books contain a complete record of every detail of the life: Every **act**, every **word**, every **motive**, every **thought**, every **emotion** and even every opportunity to **do good** that we neglected. In heaven there is a complete record of our lives **inside and out**! So to speak, God has **another me** in heaven in written form.

Ellen White understood this when she wrote:

*“As the artist takes on the polished glass a true picture of the human face, so the angels of God daily place upon the books of heaven an **exact representation** of the **character of every human being**.” Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places, p. 360*

The Bible authors described the records of life's history with the word '**books**', actually 'scrolls'. However, Ellen G. White used the idea of **photography**:

*“Remember, your **character** is being **daguerreotyped** [**photographed**] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven, **as minutely** as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies on Sexual Behavior Adultery and Divorce, p. 62.*

I am convinced that if God called a **prophet today**, the prophet would speak of the records in terms of hard drives. God speaks to prophets in the language of the times when they wrote.

The Contents of the Book (Singular)

You will notice in the following verses that God has **books** (plural) and He has a **book** (singular):

The works of each individual are recorded in God's books:

Revelation 20:12-13:

*“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and **books** were opened. And **another book** was opened, which is the **Book** of Life and the dead were judged according to their **works**, by the **things that were written in the books**.”*

We have already seen that the **books** contain the self-identity or biographical record of each human being. What does the **book** of life contain? The answer is that the book contains the names of believers in Christ.

In Philippians the apostle Paul mentioned several fellow-laborers whose names were in the book of life:

Philippians 4:3:

*“And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose **names** are in the **Book** of Life.”*

It is possible for counterfeit believers to have their names erased from the book of life:

Revelation 3:5:

*“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his **name** from the **Book** of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”*

Those who worship the beast do not have their names in the book of life:

Revelation 13:8:

*“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose **names** have not been written in the **Book of Life** of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

The name of Moses was written in the book:

Exodus 32:31-33:

*“Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! 32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot **me out of Your book** which You have written.””*

The last generation who go through the time of trouble have their names written in the book:

Daniel 12:1:

*"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, **every one who is found written in the book.**"*

Let us notice now **some details** about the pre-advent investigative judgment when the records in the books will be examined:

Every Human Being Must Appear

Every person who has claimed Jesus as Savior must appear before His judgment seat.

2 Corinthians 5:10:

*"For we must **all** appear before the **judgment seat** of Christ, that each one **may receive** the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

The Judgment Takes Place in Heaven

Daniel 7:9-10:

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the **Ancient of Days** [who lives in **heaven**] was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; **ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him** [the angels live in **heaven**]. The court was seated, and the books were opened."*

The Judgment Transpires before the Second Coming

The investigative judgment transpires in heaven while the gospel is being preached on earth:

Revelation 14:6-7:

*"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel to preach** to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for **the hour of His judgment has come [while the gospel is being preached]**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.""*

Jesus gives the Reward when He Returns

If Jesus brings the reward when He comes again then he must have determined the reward before He comes. This means people do not receive the reward when they die but rather when Jesus comes.

Matthew 16:27:

*"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, **and then** He will **reward** each according to his works."*

Revelation 22:12:

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work."*

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air [the righteous dead and the righteous living receive their reward at the same time]**. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

Where was Adam in 1844 when the Judgment Began?

God judged Adam in 1844 based on his record:

“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 482

Where was Adam in 1844 when God called him to the judgment?

John 5:28-29:

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

How could **Adam** have appeared before the great judgment seat of Christ **in 1844** if **he was dead** and disintegrated? The answer is that God judged him based on the record of his **life in the books**. So to speak, God had the angels bring Adam's DVD and on the HD screen the heavenly jury saw the story of Adam's life. Thus, Ellen White correctly wrote:

“The righteous dead will not be raised until after the judgment at which they are accounted worthy of ‘the resurrection of life.’ Hence they will not be present in person at the tribunal when their records are examined and their cases decided.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 482

The Spirit that Returns to God

The Spirit that returns to God at death is **more than just the breath of life**. The spirit is the breath along with our **self-identity** or life record that God keeps in the books. Each person has his/her own spirit or self-identity. At the resurrection, people not only receive the breath of life but with it they receive the record of

their lives. Stephen Bohr will be Stephen Bohr! Imagine if God made a mistake and gave me someone else's life record with the breath! We might say that the spirit is personified!

Jesus gave the daughter of Jairus her **very own spirit** when He resurrected her:

Luke 8:52-56:

*"Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but **sleeping**." And they **ridiculed Him**, knowing that **she was dead**. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then **her** spirit **returned** [it must have left when she died], and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat."*

As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed that Jesus would receive **his** spirit:

Acts 7:57-60:

*"Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and **stoned him**. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive **my** spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he **fell asleep**."*

When Jesus died, He commended to the Father His very own spirit:

Luke 23:46:

*"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit **My** spirit.' Having said this, He **breathed His last**."*

Ellen White made the following **profound statement** about the **spirit**:

*“Our **personal identity is preserved** in the resurrection, though not the **same particles of matter** or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. **The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved.** In the resurrection every man will have **his own character**. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The **same form** will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the **same individuality of features**, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the **same identical particles** of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him.”*
Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 6, p. 1093

It is interesting that the apostle Paul used the personal pronoun ‘you’ **interchangeably** with the word ‘spirit’:

1 Thessalonians 5:28:

*“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be **with you**. Amen.”*

Galatians 6:18:

*“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be **with your spirit**. Amen.”*

A Practical Example

Let’s use a **video camera** as an example. Suppose we turn on the **video camera today** and **then turn it off**. Ten years pass before you turn on the video camera again. When you view what you recorded, there is **no time interval** between the two video tapings. The video camera picks up where it left off.

So to speak, God is videotaping our entire life inside and out. He records our thoughts, feelings, emotions, words and actions. When **we die**, the video camera **shuts off** because we are no longer writing our life history. At the resurrection, it

turns **on again** and we continue where we left off. There has been no time interval between where I left off and picked up again. In other words, those who resurrect will **pick up** where they **left off**. This explains the rather strange verses in Job 19:

Job 19:25-27, NIV

*"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after **my** skin has been destroyed, yet in **my** flesh **I** will see God; **I myself** will see him with **my own** eyes-I, and **not another**. How my heart yearns within me!"*

What did Job mean when he said that he would see God with his own eyes, he and not another? Did he mean that only he was going to resurrect to see God? Of course not. He simply meant that when he resurrects, he will still be Job, the same Job who went into the grave.

The Wicked outside the City

Ellen White also makes a remarkable statement about the resurrection of the wicked after the millennium:

*"There are kings and generals who conquered nations, valiant men who never lost a battle, proud, ambitious warriors whose approach made kingdoms tremble. In death these **experienced no change**. As they come up from the grave, they **resume [start again]** the **current of their thoughts just where it ceased**. They are actuated by the **same desire** to conquer that ruled them when they fell. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 664*

Why do the wicked resurrect as wicked as they were in life? The answer is simple. When God resurrects them He will not only give them the breath of life; He will also return to them with it the **record of their wicked lives**! The expression 'current of their thoughts' reveals that Ellen White understood that the breath of life is an electrical current that vitalizes the body.

John F. Kennedy

The assassination of **John F. Kennedy** will help us understand how God stores and retrieves our life record. I am sure you have seen the short Zapruder clip of Kennedy's assassination. When you see that **short film clip**, is Kennedy alive or is he dead? I purposely asked an ambiguous question. When you view the film clip Kennedy is dead but the clip shows him while he was alive.

God recorded the records of Adam's life while **he was alive** but in the judgment, the heavenly jury examines them **after he is dead**. Thus, in a certain sense Adam **appeared alive** before the judgment seat of Christ at the beginning of the judgment in 1844 because the record was made while he was alive.

How the Process Worked in 1844

Even though the following passage, in context, is describing the millennial judgment of the **wicked dead**, in principle it illustrates how God performed the **judgment of the righteous** before the second coming as well:

Revelation 20:11-15:

*"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place for them. And I **saw the dead**, small and great, standing before God, and **books** were opened. And another **book** was opened, which is the **Book of Life**. And the **dead [they are dead!]** were judged according to their **works**, by the things which were written in the **books**."*

Allow me to dramatize what happened in 1844 when the judgment began. As we have seen, the life of Adam was the first to be examined. His name is in the book because he believed in Jesus. God says: 'Adam, present yourself before my judgment seat.' So, when the judgment begins, God commands the angels to bring, so to speak, the hard drive of Adam's life. His works—the record of his life—in the heavenly books is examined. The heavenly jury sees the evidence and pronounces Adam worthy of eternal life. Then the judgment continues in chronological order with everyone who has claimed Jesus as Savior.

The Daily and the Yearly Sanctuary Service

Of course, the big question is this: If God is going to give back to us the identity we developed in this life, will He return all? What about our evil tendencies and inclinations, our sinful nature, the memory of our sinful thoughts, words, actions and feelings? The answer is that God will delete all of these from our records and our bodies.

In the daily service, the sins of the penitent **entered the sanctuary**. God forgave them based on the penitent's acceptance of Christ, but they remained in the heavenly records until the name of the penitent comes up in the judgment. 1John 1:9 describes the intercessory work of Jesus in the daily service:

1 John 1:9:

*"If we confess **our** sins, He is faithful and just to forgive **us** our sins and to cleanse **us** from all unrighteousness."*

In the yearly service, God deleted from the records the sins that entered the sanctuary in the course of the year:

Leviticus 16:16:

*"So he shall make atonement for the **Holy Place**, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the **tabernacle of meeting** which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness."*

In the heavenly judgment, God examines, so to speak, the hard disk of each person's life. God will **blot out every sin** that the sinner **repented of**, sincerely **confessed** and by God's power, **overcome**. God will not return to us all the **bad things** that are on our record. This is why repentance (sorrow for sin and a turning away from it) and confession are a matter of **life or death**. Some people think that it is a threat to our assurance to have our sins recorded in the sanctuary.

However, having them there covered by the blood is our greatest assurance because if they did not enter there by the blood, then they are still on us.

The computer analogy

In order to help people understand this concept, I like to compare a person to a computer.

- ✓ The **computer is a material object** = The body is composed of matter
- ✓ The computer **processor** = The brain is our computer processor
- ✓ The **power source** = Our power source is the breath of life
- ✓ As I use my PC it takes on its own self-identity based on what I input
- ✓ There is always the possibility that my computer might **crash**
- ✓ For this reason, the **backup disk** keeps a record of the hard drives' 'identity'

If the computer crashes, I can:

- ✓ A **new computer** = Indestructible body
- ✓ With a **new processor** = the brain with much more memory
- ✓ **Plug it into** the power source = the breath of life
- ✓ Previous computer **information = self-identity** logged into the **new brain**
- ✓ Before logging in the information, God deletes all the trash.

Hope for the Worst of Sinners

In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul described his life before he encountered Christ on the Damascus road:

Acts 26:9-11:

*“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary **to the name of Jesus** of Nazareth. ¹⁰ This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I **shut up in prison**, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were **put to death**, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I **punished them often** in every synagogue and **compelled them** to blaspheme; and being exceedingly **enraged against them**, I **persecuted them** even to foreign cities.”*

However, the apostle Paul repented of his sins and forsook them. When he was baptized, his sins were forgiven and his guilt taken away. However, his sins will be deleted from the sanctuary above when his name comes up in the investigative judgment.

Acts 22:16:

*“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, **calling on the name** of the Lord.”*



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #10 – THE DEAD WHO STAND BEFORE GOD

Introduction

The Misinterpreted verse that we will study in this lesson is Revelation 20:12:

Revelation 20:12:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

How can wicked dead people stand before God during the millennium if they do not live again until after? How can dead people stand before God? Believers in the immortality of the soul claim that the souls of the dead stand before God in judgment at the moment of death. However, we shall find that that a careful study of the text does not sustain their view.

In order understand this verse, let's review some information about the who, when, where and how of the judgment and then take a look at the judgment's three stages.

The Judgment is before the Second Coming

Revelation 14:6, 7:

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

The Judgment is in Heaven

Daniel 7:9, 10: The judgment takes place in heaven:

"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened."

All Believers Must Appear in the Judgment

2 Corinthians 5:10:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

The Great Controversy, p. 483:

"As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation and closes with the living."

Believers do not Appear in Person

John 5:28, 29: Believers are in the grave until Jesus comes to resurrect them:

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."

The righteous do not appear in person but rather through the record of their lives:

"The righteous dead will not be raised until after the judgment at which they are accounted worthy of "the resurrection of life." Hence they will not be present in person at the tribunal when their records are examined and their cases decided."
Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 482

Examination before the Second Coming

Matthew 22:11-13:

"But when the king came in to see [better: 'examine'] the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Luke 12:35-37:

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them."

Luke 19:12-13:

*"Therefore, He said: "A certain nobleman went into a **far country** to **receive** for himself **a kingdom** and to **return**.¹³ So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business **till I come**.'"*

Jesus Brings the Reward

Jesus will **bring the reward** when He comes again. If He brings the reward when He comes again. Therefore, He must have determined what the reward will be **before He comes**.

Matthew 16:27:

*"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and **then He will reward** each according to his works [**what was in the books**]."*

Revelation 22:12:

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My **reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.*

Revelation 6:14-17: The Second Coming

When Jesus returns with His reward, He will sit on a great throne in the midst of great convulsions in heaven and on earth:

Revelation 6:14-17:

*"Then the **sky receded** as a scroll when it is **rolled up**, and every mountain and island was **moved out of its place** [**key word also in 20:11**].¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the **face** [**vital word also in Revelation 20:11**] of Him who sits on the **throne** and from the wrath of the Lamb!¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

Revelation 6:14-17 and Revelation 20:11 both describe the second coming of Jesus. There are several parallels between these two scriptures, a throne, one sitting on the throne and heaven and earth fleeing away and no place found for them:

Revelation 20:11:

*“Then I saw a **great white throne** and Him who **sat** on it, from whose **face** the **earth and the heaven fled away**. And there was found no **place** for them.”*

At the second coming, all the wicked will die and remain so during the thousand years. However, the righteous dead will resurrect and perform a work of judgment during the thousand years:

Revelation 20:4-5:

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and **judgment** was committed to them. Then I saw **the souls** of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands and **they [the souls] lived [if the souls lived, they must have been dead souls before this]** and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ But **the rest of the** dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”*

The Millennial Judgment

At the beginning of this lesson we discussed the investigative judgment of the righteous before the second coming of Jesus. Now we will see that God follows the same basic three-step process—examination, sentence, execution—in judging the wicked during and after the millennium. Let us begin with the millennial judgment.

Revelation 20:4:

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and **judgment was committed to them**. Then I saw the **souls** of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the **beast** or his **image**, and had not received his **mark** on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived** and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”*

This verse describes the second group of martyrs of Revelation 6:9-11 (see the study, ‘*The Souls under the Altar*’). This group of martyrs will live during the short time of trouble just before the close of probation (Matthew 24:9). They will receive the latter rain, proclaim the loud cry, and refuse to worship the beast and his image and to receive his mark. Some of those who proclaim the message will suffer a martyrs’ death.

However, these martyrs are not the **only ones** who will participate in the millennial judgment. Believers from **all ages** including **Paul** and the faithful **Corinthians** will participate as well.

1 Corinthians 6:1-3:

*“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the **saints**? ² Do you not know that the **saints** will judge the **world**? And if the world will be **judged by you**, are **you** unworthy to **judge** the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that **we** shall **judge angels**? How much more, things that pertain to this life?”*

It is during this millennial judgment that the **rest of the dead** will stand before God. However, an incisive question remains. Who are the dead who stand before God? They certainly **cannot be the righteous** because God judged them before the second coming and they are in heaven. Therefore, they must be the wicked who died at the second coming.

The critical question that remains is this: How can wicked dead people stand before God during the millennium if they do not live again until after? In short, how can dead people stand before God? Believers in the immortality of the soul claim that the souls of the dead stand before God. However, we shall find that this is not what the text says.

Revelation 20:12:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

In order to understand how the dead stand before God, we must review how the righteous dead stood before God during the pre-advent investigative judgment.

The Expanded Meaning of the Word “Spirit”

As we saw in our previous lesson, with the passing of time, the spirit or character of man becomes **individualized** or **personalized**. When Jesus comes, He will not only resurrect the bodies of the righteous and give them the **breath of life**. He will also return to them their **self-identity** (who they were when they died) which He has **preserved** in the heavenly books. Let’s review this expanded concept of the spirit.

Ecclesiastes 12:7:

“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

During the Millennium, God will bring to view the life record of the wicked while they are still dead. This is the sense in which the dead stand before God. The books (plural) contain an **exact transcript** (the ‘spirit’) of their unrepentant lives. The records were made while they were alive but they are examined while they are dead.

Revelation 20:12:

*"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were **judged according to their works**, by the things which were **written in the books**."*

Several Bible texts corroborate this expanded concept of the 'spirit'. When **Iairus' daughter** resurrected, she not only received once again her capacity to breathe. She also received her own personal identity. This is denoted by the personal pronoun 'her'. The girl was the same person when she resurrected as when she died:

Luke 8:55:

*"Then **her** spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat."*

When **Stephen** resurrects from the dead, he will be Stephen. This is denoted by the possessive pronoun 'my'. No doubt, Stephen will recognize Saul of Tarsus and rejoice over his salvation:

Acts 7:59, 60:

*"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive **my** spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep."*

When **Jesus died**, He commended **His** spirit to His Father. Jesus did not say, 'into your hands I commit 'the spirit' but rather 'my spirit'. When He resurrected, He was the same Jesus who went into the tomb with a glorified body:

Luke 23:46:

*"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit **My** spirit [pneuma].'" Having said this, He breathed His last **[pneuma]**."*

In all these cases, God not only returned the capacity to breathe but also the **individuality** of each. This is the reason why Paul used the word 'spirit' synonymously with the personal pronoun 'you':

1 Thessalonians 5:28:

*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be **with you**. Amen."*

Galatians 6:18:

*"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be **with your spirit**. Amen."*

Ellen White, who is always in harmony with Scripture, explained the meaning of the word 'spirit':

*"Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The **spirit, the character, is returned to God**, there to be **preserved**. In the resurrection every man **will have his own character**. God in His own time will call forth the dead giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing **the same individuality** of features, so that **friend will recognize friend**. There is no law of God in nature that shows that God gives back the **same identical particles of matter** that composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him."*

Therefore, we have the answer to our question. The fact is that the wicked dead stand before God in the same way that the righteous dead stood before God in the pre-advent judgment, through the record of their lives!

The Post Millennial judgment

After the thousand years, the earth and the sea give up the dead that are in them. Whereas during the thousand years the 'dead' stood before God through their records, the dead will now resurrect and stand before God in person. They will

then be able to see the reason why they are outside the city and they will agree that God was just in the decision.

Revelation 20:13:

*“The sea **gave up** the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades **delivered up** the dead who were in them. And **they were judged**, each one according to his works.”*

Isaiah 26:19:

*“Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall **cast out the dead**.”*

Ellen White described the resurrection of the wicked after the thousand years:

*“There are kings and generals who conquered nations, valiant men who never lost a battle, proud, ambitious warriors whose approach made kingdoms tremble. In death these **experienced no change**. As they come up from the grave, they **resume [start again]** the **current of their thoughts just where it ceased**. They are actuated by the **same desire** to conquer that ruled them when they fell. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 664*

*“As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are **conscious of every sin** which they have **ever committed**. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—all appear **as if written** in letters of fire.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 666.*

Revelation 20:14, 15:

*“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵
And anyone **not found written** in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

Revelation 21:1: New heavens and earth:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #11 – THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic turned many people’s lives upside down. Hundreds of thousands died in the United States and millions worldwide. Family members were unable to attend the funerals of their loved ones and some of the dead did not even have family members or friends to claim them. Losing grandmothers and grandfathers, fathers and mothers, children, friends has been a painful ordeal. Furthermore, many of those who have not contracted the virus experience panic at the thought of being infected. In these times when people face their mortality, the Bible offers hope.

John 11 is a story that brings comfort to those who suffer in our time. As the story begins, Jesus was in the region beyond the Jordan where John the Baptist baptized Jesus. The place was about 15 miles from Bethany where Lazarus and his sisters lived. It would have taken the better part of one day for Jesus to travel from Bethabara to Bethany.

A Place of Refuge

Jesus enjoyed spending time at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus because it was a refuge from the bitter hatred and plotting of His enemies. There he

could rest with people who truly cared for Him. The text tells us that Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha.

During His ministry, Jesus depended on the kindness of others to provide Him a place to sleep and eat. In fact, at the beginning of His ministry when Judas offered to follow Him, Jesus told him that 'foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man does not have a place to lay His head.'

The Message to Jesus and His Reaction (John 11:1-3)

"Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

At the time there was no telephone, internet or telegraph, therefore a messenger had to travel from Bethany to Bethabara to deliver the news to Jesus. The journey would have taken the better part of a full day.

Jesus reacted to the news with a ho-hum attitude. He seemed to be totally disinterested that Lazarus was on his deathbed. This nonchalant attitude surprised the disciples because they knew that Jesus loved Lazarus. Regarding this seemingly cold response, the book Desire of Ages remarks:

"When Christ heard the message, the disciples thought He received it coldly. He did not manifest the sorrow they expected Him to show." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 526

Jesus Delays Two Days (John 11:4-6)

"When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death [and yet Lazarus died], but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified [so that they recognize that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God] through it." ⁵ Now

***Jesus loved** Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ **So**, when He heard that he was sick, He **stayed two more days** in the place where He was."*

To compound the puzzlement of the disciples, Jesus purposely delayed two days to reach Lazarus. In the minds of the disciples, if Jesus truly loved Lazarus, He would have left for Bethany immediately.

According to the *Desire of Ages*, Jesus had nothing to say about Lazarus during those **two days** which further confused His disciples:

*"During the two days Christ seemed to have **dismissed the message from His mind; for He did not speak of Lazarus.**" Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 526*

From Bethabara to Bethany in Judea (John 11:7-8)

After delaying two days, Jesus told His disciples that they were going to return to Bethany:

John 11:7:

*"Then after this **[after the two days]** He said to the disciples, "Let us go to **Judea again.**"*

The disciples were surprised that Jesus wanted to return to Judea because, according to the immediately preceding context, there was where the hatred against Jesus was most intense:

John 11:8:

*"The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews **sought to stone** You and are You going there again?"*

John 8:59 they picked up stones to stone Him for saying 'before Abraham was, I am'

John 10:30 they again picked up stones because Jesus said, “*I and my Father are One*”

Twelve Hours in the Day (verse 9)

Before continuing with verse 9, we need to remember that there was a time on the **Father's calendar** for each event of the life of Jesus:

*“The words, ‘Mine hour is not yet come,’ point to the fact that every act of Christ's life on earth was in fulfillment of the plan that had existed from the **days of eternity**. Before He came to earth, the **plan lay out before Him**, perfect in all its **details**. However, as He walked among men, He was guided, step by step, by the Father's will. He did not hesitate to act at the appointed time. With the same submission, He waited until **the time had come**.”* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 147

When the disciples complained about the dangers of returning to Judea, Jesus answered them with strange words:

John 11:8, 9A:

*“The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews **sought to stone** You and are You going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not **twelve hours in the day**?”*

What did Jesus mean when He said that there are twelve hours in the day? The answer is that Jesus compared the length of His ministry with a day of twelve hours. The **beginning of His ministry** was **hour #1** and His death occurred at **hour #12**. This is what Jesus meant when He said:

John 9:4:

*“I must work the works of Him who sent Me **while it is day** [before His death]; the night is coming [when He died] when no one can work.”*

During His ministry Jesus repeatedly said that ‘his hour had not yet come’. On a certain occasion, Jesus told the Jews that **His Father had sent Him** into the world

and His enemies were not able to lay a finger on Him because His hour—the time for His death—had not yet come:

John 7:30:

*“Then they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because **His hour** had not yet come.”*

On another occasion, his enemies could not arrest Him because His hour—that is, hour # 12] for his passion and death had not yet come:

John 8:20:

*“These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for **His hour** had not yet come.”*

On Thursday evening on the way to Gethsemane, Jesus uttered His **intercessory prayer** for His disciples. John 17 tells us that Jesus no longer said that his hour had not yet come but rather that the hour—hour # 12—had come:

John 17:1:

*“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, **the hour has come**. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.”*

Ellen White explained the meaning of ‘twelve hours in the day’:

*[Jesus said:] “**My** twelve hours of day are not yet ended. I have entered upon the **last remnant** of **My** day; but while **any of this remains**, I am safe.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 526*

Jesus had no reason to fear going to Judea because His allotted time had not come:

*“It was their purpose to compass His death, but this purpose had not succeeded, because some of **His allotted time** still remained. During this time Jesus had the*

guardianship of heavenly angels; and even in the regions of **Judea**, where the rabbis were plotting how they might take Him and put Him to death, **no harm could come to Him.**" Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 527, 528

Walking in the Day

Jesus then went on to say that as long as He walked in the day, He had nothing to fear, but if He walked in the night, he had reason to fear:

Verses 9B, 10:

*"If anyone **walks in the day**, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if one **walks in the night**, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

Ellen White explained the words of Jesus:

*"He who does the will of God, who walks in the path that God has marked out, cannot stumble and fall. The light of God's guiding Spirit gives him a **clear perception of his duty**, and leads him aright until the **close of his work**. "But if a man walk in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him." **He who walks in a path of his own choosing, where God has not called him, will stumble.** For him day is turned into night, and wherever he may be, **he is not secure.**" Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 527*

Death as Sleep (John 11:11-14)

Jesus then told His disciples that Lazarus was asleep but they did not understand that Jesus, as is common in Scripture, was comparing death with sleep:

*"These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus **sleeps**, but I go that I may **wake him up**." ¹² Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he **sleeps** he will get well." ¹³ However, Jesus **spoke of his death**, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus said to them plainly, "**Lazarus is dead.**"*

Gabriel compared death with sleep:

Daniel 12:2:

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

When Jesus compared the death of Jairus’ daughter with sleep the crowd ridiculed Him. The response of the crowd was **surprising** because the Jews knew from the Old Testament that sleep was a **euphemism** for death.

Luke 8:52, 53:

*“Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, “Do not weep; she is **not dead**, but **sleeping**.” ⁵³ And they **ridiculed** Him, knowing that **she was dead**.”*

Luke also use sleep as a euphemism for death:

Acts 7:59, 60:

*“And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he **fell asleep**.”*

The apostle Paul wrote that those who died are asleep:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

*“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are **asleep**. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the **voice** of an archangel, and with the **trumpet** of God and the dead in Christ **will rise** first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

Glad I was not there (John 11:15-16)

Jesus then went on to say something that further confused the disciples:

"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, [so] that you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him." ¹⁶ Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him [lack of faith]."

What did Jesus mean when He said that he was glad that he was not there while Lazarus was sick but alive?

"Had Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. Death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus in the presence of the Life-giver. Therefore, Christ remained away. He suffered the enemy to exercise his power, that He might drive him back, a conquered foe." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 528

Jesus Encounters Martha (John 11:17-26)

John 11:17:

"So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days."

Lazarus was mortally ill and must have died around the time that the messenger left Bethany to bear the news to Jesus:

- ✓ One day for the messenger to travel to where Jesus was.
- ✓ Two days that Jesus delayed.
- ✓ One day for Jesus to travel to Bethany.

John 11:18-26:

*"Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. ¹⁹ And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, **to comfort them** concerning their brother. ²⁰ Now **Martha**, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹ Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, **if** You had been here, my brother would **not have died**. ²² But even now I know that whatever **You ask of God**, God will give You." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother **will rise again**." ²⁴ Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at **the last day**." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who **believes** in Me, though **he may die**, he **shall live**. [see John 6:39, 40, 44, 54] ²⁶ And whoever lives and **believes** in Me shall **never die**. Do you **believe** this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I **believe** that You are the **Christ, the Son of God**, [like Peter who made the same confession, she did not fully understand her own confession] who is to come into the world."*

Jesus Encounters Mary (verses 28-37)

Jesus then met Jesus on the outskirts of the city. As did Martha, she believed that if Jesus had been there, her brother would not have died. She knew that Jesus was the great healer, however, could He resurrect the dead?

*"And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." ²⁹ As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had **not yet come into the town**, but was in the place where Martha met Him. ³¹ Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there." ³² Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would **not have died**."*

Mary's Grief and the Unbelief of the Crowd (verses 33-36)

When Jesus saw Mary and the crowd weeping 'he groaned in the spirit and was deeply troubled'. He was not troubled because His friend Lazarus was dead. After

all, He knew that He was going to resurrect Him. He wept because He felt the pain of Mary and Martha. Although they believed in Him, they did not understand the full implications of their belief. Jesus also groaned because of the unbelief of the crowd:

*"Therefore, when Jesus saw her **[Mary] weeping**, and **the Jews** who came with her **weeping**, He **groaned in the spirit and was troubled**. **[because of their unbelief]***
³⁴ And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."
³⁵ **Jesus wept.** ³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" ³⁷ And some of them said, "**Could not [unbelief]** this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have **kept this man from dying?**"

Ellen White explained:

*"Christ did **not weep for Lazarus**; for He was about to call him from the grave. He wept because many of those now mourning for Lazarus would soon **plan the death of Him** who was the resurrection and the life. He saw that with many, what passed as a demonstration of grief was only pretense. He knew that some in the company, now manifesting **hypocritical sorrow**, would ere long be planning the death, not only of the mighty miracle worker, but of the **one to be raised** from the dead." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 533*

Removal of the Stone (John 11:38-40)

John 11:38-39:

In this story, Jesus did and said all sorts of things that puzzled the disciples. Perhaps the most surprising part of the story was when Jesus gave was to remove the stone:

*"Then Jesus, again **groaning in Himself**, **[once again, at their unbelief]** came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.'*

*"Christ could have **commanded the stone** to remove, and **it would have obeyed** His voice. He could have bidden **the angels** who were close by His side to do this. At His bidding, **invisible hands** would have removed the stone." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 533*

*"The miracles of Christ for the afflicted and suffering were wrought by the power of God through the ministration of **the angels**." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 143*

Martha's response to Christ's command reveals that even she and Mary had no idea that Jesus was the kind of Messiah who could resurrect the dead:

Verses 39, 40:

*"**Martha**, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time **there is a stench**, for he has been **dead four days**." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that **if** you would **believe** you would **see the glory of God**?"*

Ellen White explained that Jesus waited four days to resurrect Lazarus because the unbelieving **Pharisees** would have claimed that Lazarus was not really dead if Jesus had been there immediately after his death. I imagine that all eyes were riveted on the entrance to the tomb:

*"When Christ raised to life the **daughter of Jairus**, He had said, "The damsel is not dead, but sleeps." Mark 5:39. As she had been **sick only a short time**, and was **raised immediately after death**, the Pharisees declared that the child had **not been dead**; that Christ Himself had said she was only asleep. They had tried to make it appear that Christ could not cure disease, **that there was foul play about His miracles**. **But in this case, none could deny that Lazarus was dead.**" Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 533, 534*

The Prayer to the Father (verse 41-42)

After the stone was removed, Jesus thanked His Father for having heard His prayer. It is notable that he thanked His Father before He resurrected Lazarus, not after:

*"Then they **took away the stone** from the place where the dead man was lying and Jesus **lifted up His eyes** and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² And I know that **You always hear Me**, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may **believe that You sent Me**."*

Jesus wanted everyone present to know that He was the Son of God and that He never acted independently of His Father. He also hoped that when those present saw that the Father answered His prayer, they would believe that He was the Messiah:

*"In all that He did, Christ was **co-operating** with His Father. Ever He had been careful to make it evident that He did not work independently; **it was by faith and prayer that He wrought His miracles**. Christ desired all to know **His relationship with His Father**." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 536*

The Resurrection (John 11:43, 44)

*"Now when He had said these things, He **cried [the shout of 1 Thessalonians]** with a **loud voice**, 'Lazarus, come forth' and he who had died **came out** bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his **face was wrapped with a cloth**. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."*

- ✓ Jesus said, 'Come forth', **not come down!** The text tells us that Lazarus **came out!**
- ✓ It would have been **cruel** for Jesus to call him down from heaven back to earth.

*“Lazarus is set free, and stands before the company, not as one emaciated from disease, and with feeble, tottering limbs, but as **a man in the prime of life**, and in the **vigor** of a noble manhood. His eyes beam with intelligence and with love for his Savior. He casts himself in adoration at the feet of Jesus.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 536*

Many Believe and Follow Him (John 11:45)

*“Then **many** of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, **believed in Him**. “*

Many Jews among the populace believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. However, the **religious leadership** particularly the **Pharisees**, refused to believe even though Jesus had resurrected one who had been dead four days.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

At the very end of the **third year** of His ministry, **less than a month** before He resurrected Lazarus Jesus told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This is the only parable where Jesus used a **proper name** for a person in any of His parables. He addressed this parable especially **to the Pharisees** who believed in the **immortality of the soul** and would reject Him when He resurrected Lazarus.

Luke 16:14:

*“Now the **Pharisees**, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they **derided Him**.”*

The parable tells us that the rewards of the Pharisees and the Gentiles was reversed:

- ✓ The rich man, representing the **Pharisees**, ended up in **hades** when he expected to go to Abraham's bosom.

- ✓ Poor **Lazarus** who expected to go to *hades*, ended up in the **bosom of Abraham**.

Luke 16:14, 27-31:

While the rich man was figuratively burning in the fires of *hades*, he begged Abraham to **send** Lazarus **from the dead** to warn his brothers not to come to this place of burning:

*"Then he [the rich man] said [to Abraham], 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would **send him** [the supposed soul of Lazarus that was burning in *hades*] to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him [to the rich man], 'they have **Moses and the prophets** [#1: The Scriptures]; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said [the rich man to Abraham], 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them **from the dead**, [the rich man believed in the immortality of the soul] they will repent.' ³¹ But he [Abraham] said to him [the rich man], 'If they do not hear **Moses and the prophets** [#1: The Scriptures], neither will they be persuaded though one **rise from the dead** [#2: the power of God].'"*

The **same word 'rise'** appears in **John 6:39, 40, 44, 54** and refers to the resurrection. In other words, Abraham (and Jesus) believed that Lazarus could go only if he resurrected from the dead:

*"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should **raise it up** at the **last day**. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will **raise him up** at the **last day**." ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will **raise him up** at the **last day**. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will **raise him up** at the **last day**".*

The Pharisees Plot to kill Jesus

The parable of Jesus proved true. Less than one month later, Jesus resurrected a man called Lazarus and instead of believing in Jesus, the Pharisees sought to kill Him. Jesus had said that they would not believe though one rise from the dead and He was right. We just noticed that many of the Jews believed in Jesus, but not all. Some of them who had shed crocodile tears at the tomb of Lazarus, went and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done. The Pharisees did not believe the messianic prophecies in Moses and the prophets. And therefore, just as the parable said, they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah when one rose from the dead. The Pharisees then gathered the Sanhedrin and they plotted to put Jesus to death:

"But [the Greek conjunction indicates a contrast with those who believed] some [those who were crying crocodile tears] of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." ⁴⁹ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death."

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

The Pharisees not only sought to kill Jesus but also Lazarus:

John 12:9-11:

"Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

¹⁰ But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus."



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #12 – THE KEYS OF HADES

Greek words with a Hebrew Meaning

The words ‘soul,’ ‘spirit’ and ‘*hades*’ were common in the Greek world and the same words appear frequently in the New Testament.

The critical question is whether these words carry the same meaning in the biblical world as they did in the Greek world. In other words, should we determine the meaning of these New Testament words by how the Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates used them, or must we determine their meaning by the use of their equivalent Hebrew words in the Old Testament.

In order to ascertain the answer to this very important question, we will study two words. The first is the Hebrew word *Sheol* and the second is the Greek word *Hades*.

The Hebrew Word *Sheol*

The King James Version translates the Hebrew word *Sheol* in three main ways:

- ‘Grave’ some 30 times
- ‘Hell’ some 31 times

- A **handful** translate the word, '**pit**' (for example, Numbers 16:30, 33).

The translation of the word *Sheol* in Bible versions is **inconsistent**. In the **overwhelming majority** of the 31 times it is translated 'hell' in the King James Version, it could just as correctly have been translated '**grave**'. Sometimes Bible versions translate it 'grave', sometimes 'hell' and sometimes they simply transliterate it. This makes its true meaning confusing to the reader.

Before we examine some examples, we need to remember that Hebrew poetry functions based on parallelism of which there are three basic types, synonymous, antithetical and synthetic. In simple terms, in synonymous parallelism the second line repeats the same thought as the first but in different words. In antithetical parallelism, the second line says the opposite as the first and in synthetic parallelism the second line completes the thought of the first.

The following examples compare the translation of the word *Sheol* in the New King James Version with the King James Version in brackets:

1 Samuel 2:6:

*"The LORD **kills** and **makes alive**; He brings **down to the grave** [**'grave'** in the KJV] and **brings up**."*

Psalms 49:14-15:

*"Like sheep they are laid in the **grave** [**'grave'** KJV]; **death** shall **feed** on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the **grave** [**'grave'** KJV], far from their dwelling. ¹⁵ But God will redeem **my soul** [**nephesh**] from the power of the **grave** [**'grave'** KJV], for He shall receive me."*

Psalms 89:48:

*"What man can live and not see **death**? Can he deliver his **life** [**'soul'** in the KJV] from the power of the **grave**? [**'grave'** KJV]."*

The personal pronouns 'you' and 'your' indicate that the total person goes to Sheol at death:

Ecclesiastes 9:10:

*"Whatever **your** hand finds to do, do it with your might for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the **grave** [**'grave'** KJV] where **you** [**'you and 'soul'** are interchangeable] are going."*

The personal pronoun 'I' indicates that the total person goes to Sheol, not the disincarnate soul:

Isaiah 38:10:

*"**I** said, 'In the prime of my life **I** shall go to the **gates** of **Sheol** [**the grave**, KJV]; **I** am deprived of the remainder of my years.'"*

In the following text the word Sheol is placed in synonymous parallelism with the word 'death':

Isaiah 38:18:

*"For **Sheol** [**the grave**, KJV] cannot **thank You**, **death** cannot **praise You**; those who **go down to the pit** cannot hope for Your truth."*

Once again, the word Sheol is placed in synonymous parallelism with the word 'death':

Psalms 6:5:

*"For in **death** there is **no remembrance** of You; in the **grave** [**'grave**, KJV] who will give You **thanks**?"*

Job 14 provides a vivid description of where a person goes when they die. Death is compared with the drying of waters and sleep. Job actually longs to go to

Sheol which would not be true if Sheol means 'hell'. Clearly, Job expected to be awakened and changed at the second coming, not at death:

Job 14:10-15:

*"But man **dies** and is **laid away**; indeed, he **breathes his last** and where is he? ¹¹ As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes **parched** and **dries up**, ¹² so man **lies down** and does not rise. Till the heavens **are no more**, they will **not awake** nor be **roused** from their **sleep**. ¹³ "Oh, that You would hide me in the **grave** [**'grave' in the KJV; Job wanted to go to Sheol**], that You would **conceal me** until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! ¹⁴ If a man **dies**, shall he **live again**? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my **change** [**used of a change of clothing, see 1 Corinthians 15:51-55**] comes. ¹⁵ You shall **call**, and I will **answer** You; You shall **desire** the work of Your hands."*

Death is compared with a cloud that disappears and vanishes away like a Fresno fog disappears when the sun rises:

Job 7:9:

*"As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, so he who goes down to the **grave** [**'grave in the KJV**] does not come up."*

The following are examples from the New King James Version where the King James Version translates the word *Sheol* with the word 'hell'. Immediately we sense the inconsistency of the King James Version:

In the following example, death and Sheol are in synonymous parallelism:

Psalms 116:3:

*"The pains of **death** surrounded me, and the pangs of **Sheol** laid hold of me [**like Jesus in Gethsemane**]; I found trouble and sorrow."*

Regarding the enticing harlot, Salomon placed *Sheol* and death in synonymous parallelism:

Proverbs 7:27:

*"Her house is the way to hell [**'hell' in the KJV**], descending to the chambers of death."*

In the following text Solomon places death and *Sheol* in synonymous parallelism:

Proverbs 5:5:

*"Her [**the strange woman's**] feet go down to death; her steps lay hold of hell [**'hell' in both the KJV and NKJV**]."*

Proverbs 15:24 contains an antithetical parallelism where the 'way of life' is upward and the 'way to *Sheol*' is downward:

Proverbs 15:24:

*"The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell [**'hell' in both the KJV and NKJV**] below."*

The phrase, 'a covenant with death' is placed in synonymous parallelism with an agreement with *Sheol*:

Isaiah 28:15:

*"Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol [**'hell' in the NKJV**] we are in agreement."*

Amos 9:2:

"Though they dig into hell ['hell' in both the KJV and NKJV], from there my hand shall take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down."

Jonah 2:2:

"And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol ['hell' in the KJV] I cried, and You heard my voice."

The New Testament Equivalent of Sheol

The crucial question that we face at this point is, which New Testament **Greek word** is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Sheol*. The answer is **not hard to find**; it is the word **hades**. Before I prove this, allow me to give you a few **statistics** about *hades* in the various Bible versions.

Hades in the New Testament

The word *hades* appears **11 times** in the New Testament. **Only once** (in the parable of the **rich man and Lazarus** where Jesus was using the **common beliefs** of the Pharisees of His day to make a point) does it describe **a place of burning**. The other ten times the word could very well be translated '**grave**'.

The King James Translation of Hades

- The King James Version translates the word **ten times** as '**hell**'
- **Only once** does the King James Version translate the word as '**grave**' (1 Corinthians 15:55) because the translators understood that it would be absurd to suggest that the righteous will come forth from hell!

The New King James Translation of Hades

The New King James Version consistently **transliterates** the Greek word *hades* in **all eleven references**.

The New International Version Translation of Hades

The NIV translation of *Hades* is even more complicated:

- **Twice** the NIV translates the word as '**depths**' (Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15)
- **Thrice** the NIV translates with the word '**grave**' (Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:55)
- **Five** times the NIV transliterates the word with '**hades**' (Matthew 16:18; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14)
- **Only once** does the NIV translate the word as '**hell**', in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23)

Hades Equivalent to Sheol

How do we know that the word *hades* in the **New Testament** is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Sheol* in the **Old**? The key texts are in Hosea 13:14 and Psalm 16:8-10.

In Hosea the word 'grave' is placed in synonymous parallelism with 'death':

Hosea 13:14:

*"I will ransom them from the power of the **grave** [**Sheol**]; I will redeem them from **death**. O **Death**, I will be your plagues! O **Grave** [**Sheol**], I will be your destruction!"*

The apostle Paul paraphrases Hosea 13:14 in 1 Corinthians 15:55 by placing the words 'hades' and 'death' in parallel fashion:

1 Corinthians 15:54-55:

*"So when this **corruptible** has put on **incorruption**, and this **mortal** has put on **immortality** then shall be brought to pass the saying that is **written [in Hosea 13:14]: 'Death** is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O **Death**, where is your sting? O **Hades [grave in the KJV]**, where is your victory?"*

There is another Old Testament source that is quoted in the New Testament which proves that *hades* in the New Testament is equivalent to *Sheol*:

Psalm 16:8-10, NKJV:

*"I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My **flesh** also will **rest** in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave **my soul [nephesh]** in **Sheol ['hell' in the KJV]**, nor will You allow Your **Holy One** to see **corruption**."*

Notice the following synonymous parallelism in verse 10 as found in the New King James Version:

- ✓ *"**You** will not leave my **soul** in **Sheol**"*
- ✓ *"**You** will not allow your **Holy One** to see **corruption**"*

Clearly the word 'soul' is parallel to 'Holy One' in the first line and the word 'hell' is parallel to the word 'corruption' in the second. One cannot miss the point that the soul **is** the Holy One!

The apostle Peter quoted Psalm 16 in His Pentecostal sermon in Acts 2 and he used the word *Hades* as equivalent to the word *Sheol*:

Acts 2:27, KJV:

*"Because thou wilt not leave my **soul [psuche]** in **hell [Hades]**, neither wilt thou suffer thine **Holy One** to see **corruption**."*

Acts 2:27, NKJV:

*“For You will not leave my soul in Hades [**‘hell’ in the KJV**], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”*

In verse 31, Peter applied Psalm 16:8-10 to the resurrection of Jesus:

Acts 2:31, NKJV:

*“He [**David**], foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul [*psyche*] was not left in Hades [**‘hell’ in the KJV**], nor did His flesh see corruption.”*

The **NIV Version** is clearer than the King James and New King James in its translation of verses 27 and 31. Instead of the word ‘soul’ it uses the personal pronoun ‘me’ and instead of the word ‘hell’ or ‘Hades’ it uses the word ‘grave’:

“... because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. . . Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.”

Other References to Hades

Matthew 16:18:

*“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades [**‘hell’ in the KJV**] shall not prevail against it.”*

Once again, both the King James and New King James Versions translate the word *Hades* with ‘hell’. Other versions also translate ‘hell’ while others simply transliterate the word. Notably, some versions simply translate, the word *Hades* as the ‘powers of death’ or the ‘gates of death’. The immediately succeeding context indicates that the reason why the gates (remember that in the Old Testament *Sheol* had gates?) of *Hades* would not prevail against the church is

because Jesus was going to rise from the grave on the third day!! The word *Hades* in this verse could have easily been translated 'grave'.

Luke 10:15:

Regarding Capernaum Jesus said:

*"And you, Capernaum, who are **exalted to heaven**, will be thrust down to **Hades** [**'hell'** in the KJV]."*

Matthew 11:23:

*And you, Capernaum, who are **exalted to heaven**, will be brought down to **Hades** [**'hell in the KJV'**]."*

Virtually all Bible versions translate the word 'Hades' with 'hell' or simply transliterate the word. However, a few versions more accurately translate, 'depths' 'place of death' 'place of the dead' 'among the dead'.

Two Characteristics of the Grave

The Bible explains that the grave has two main characteristics. It is a dark place and a silent place. No place is **darker** or more **silent** than being **six feet under!**

Psalms 115:17: The grave is a **silent** place:

*"The **dead** do not praise the LORD nor any who go **down** into **silence**."*

Job 17:13, 14: The grave is a place of **darkness**:

*"If I wait for the **grave** [**Sheol**] as my house, if I make my bed in the **darkness**,¹⁴ if I say to **corruption**, 'You are my father,' and to the **worm**, 'You are my mother and my sister.'"*

The Firstborn from the Dead

The book of Revelation refers to Jesus as the Firstborn from the Dead:

Revelation 1:5:

*‘... and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the **firstborn from the dead**, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.”*

The expression ‘Firstborn from the Dead’ does not mean that Jesus was the first person in history to resurrect from the dead. Several persons resurrected before Jesus did:

Old Testament resurrected saints: Moses, the widow of Zarephath’s son, the Shunammite woman’s son, dead body that touched Elisha’s bones.

New Testament resurrected saints: The son of the widow of Nain, Jairus’ daughter and Lazarus.

The word ‘Firstborn’ is used in a figurative sense and refers to the **preeminence** (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18) of Jesus’ resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus made all other resurrections possible.

The Christian Hope is in the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:16-22:

*“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have **fallen asleep** in Christ have **perished** [how could they perish if they are in heaven?]. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now **Christ is risen from the dead**, and has become the **first fruits** of those who have **fallen asleep**. ²¹ For since by man came **death**, by Man also came the*

resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all **die**, even so in Christ all shall be **made alive**.”

When Jesus resurrected from the dead he also resurrected many saints and took them to heaven forty days later. They were a sample of all who will come forth from the grave at the second coming.

Matthew 27:51-53:

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

The Word Hades in Revelation

The first reference to the word *Hades* is in Revelation 1:17, 18. Most Bible versions transliterate the word *Hades*, a few translate with the word ‘hell’, a couple refer to it as ‘the world of the dead’ and the *New Living* and *Phillips* translate ‘death and the grave’:

Revelation 1:17, 18:

*“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am He who **lives**, and was **dead**, and behold, I am **alive forevermore**. Amen. And I have the keys of **Hades** [*hell in the KJV*] and of **Death**.”*

- ✓ **Satan** is the **jailer** (Isaiah 14:17).
- ✓ The **tomb** is the **prison**.
- ✓ The dead are the **prisoners**.
- ✓ The jailer **has the keys** and **dares Jesus** to take them from him.

✓ Jesus goes to the grave, **takes away the keys**, resurrects, and cries out:

"I am the resurrection and the life, because I live, you will live also."

In the wilderness, God neutralized the venom of the serpents by raising a serpent. Jesus applied this serpent to Himself (John 3:14, 15). Scientists make **anti-venom** from **venom**. Likewise, Jesus **defeated the venom of death by His death**! He went into tomb, grabbed the keys from Satan and came out!

Hebrews 2:14-15:

*"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that **through death** He might destroy him who had the **power of death**, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through **fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

Revelation 6:8 contains the next use of the word Hades:

Revelation 6:8:

*"So I looked, and behold, a **pale** horse and the name of him who sat on it was **Death**, and **Hades** [**hell in the KJV**] followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth."*

Most modern versions simply transliterate the word *Hades* in this verse. The King James Version and a few others translate the word *Hades* as 'hell'. Notably, the *New Living Translation* renders the last part of verse 8 as 'its rider was named Death, and his companion was **the Grave**.' The *Phillips Translation* renders it 'the name of its rider was death, and **the grave** followed close behind him.'

The final two references to *Hades* are in Revelation 20:13, 14:

Revelation 20:13-15, NKJV:

*“The sea gave up the **dead** who were in it, and **Death** and **Hades** [**‘hell’ in the KJV**] delivered up the **dead** [notice that the people in **hades** were **dead**, not **alive**] who were in them and they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then **Death** and **Hades** [**‘hell’ in the KJV**] were cast into the lake of fire [**hades cannot be the lake of fire because it is cast into the lake of fire**]. This is the **second death**. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire [**the wicked are cast into hell after the millennium, not immediately after death**].”*

Most Bible versions either transliterate the word ‘*Hades*’ or translate it ‘hell’. However, some versions translate the word *Hades* as ‘grave’ ‘kingdom’ or ‘world of the dead’:

- ✓ **Contemporary English Version**: ‘death and **its kingdom** were thrown into the lake of fire’.
- ✓ **Today’s English Version**: “Then death and the **world of the dead** were thrown into the lake of fire.”
- ✓ **New Living Translation**: Then death and **the grave** were thrown into the lake of fire.”
- ✓ **Phillips Translation**: ‘Then death and **the grave** were themselves hurled into the lake of fire.’

No More Death

The good news is that after the fires have consumed sin and sinners, there will be no more death or grave. There will not be a corner in the universe where the

wicked continue burning and writhing in pain throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity:

1 Corinthians 15:26:

*“The **last enemy** that will be destroyed is **death**.”*

Revelation 21:4:

*“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be **no more death**, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

The important point is to have the Holy Spirit in our lives, because if we should die, we will resurrect:

Romans 8:11:

*“But **if the Spirit** of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also **give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you**.”*

The last reference to the word Hades in the New Testament is in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We will dedicate the entire **next lesson** to a careful study of this verse.

Luke 16:23:

*“And being in torments in **Hades**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.”*

“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #13 – THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Introduction

We know that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable because Luke used a distinctive opening formula for the parables of Jesus. The phrase, ‘there was a certain. . .’ was Christ’s way Christ introduced His parables in the gospel of Luke (see Luke 15:11; 7:41; 19:2; 20:9).

Luke 16:1:

“He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.”

Jesus occasionally used the parables that were common in His day but gave them an unexpected twist. The Pharisees had a similar story to this one, and Jesus used it but gave it a surprising twist to teach a deep spiritual truth.

Certain Bible expositors claim that the story of the rich man and Lazarus cannot be a parable because Jesus used the proper name ‘Lazarus’ and Jesus never used proper names in His parables—the actors in the parables are always anonymous. Later in our study, we will see that Jesus purposely used the proper name ‘Lazarus’ in this particular parable for a very good reason

Addressed to the Pharisees

It is important to remember that Jesus addressed this parable to the **Pharisees** as we can see from the preceding context:

Luke 16:14:

*“Now the **Pharisees**, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they **derided Him**.”*

Scholars agree that Luke wrote his gospel for a **Greek audience**. This fact makes it easier to understand **why** Luke is the only gospel writer that included this parable in his book. When Jesus originally told the parable, the Pharisees were His target audience. However, it would also have resonated with a Greek audience. However, if Jesus had been addressing the **Sadducees** He would never have used this parable for they did not believe in the afterlife.

Flavius Josephus (who was a **Pharisee** himself, born in the year 37 AD) described the anthropology of the Pharisees:

*“They [**the Pharisees**] say that **all souls are incorruptible** but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies—but that the **souls** of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. But the Sadducees . . . **take away** the belief of the **immortal duration of the soul**, and the punishments and rewards in **Hades**.”*
Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II.14

The Bible confirms the words of Josephus regarding the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees on death and the afterlife:

Acts 23:8:

*“For the **Sadducees** say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the **Pharisees** confess both.”*

Ellen White concurred with both the **Bible and Josephus**:

*“In this parable Christ was meeting the people **on their own ground**. The doctrine of a **conscious state of existence** between death and the resurrection was **held by many** of those who were listening to Christ's words. The Savior **knew of their ideas**, and He **framed His parable** so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions.” Christ's Object Lessons, p. 263*

Even the **disciples** of Jesus had imbibed erroneous views about death and the afterlife that entered Judaism during the inter-testamental period:

Mark 6:49:

*“But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been **a spirit**, and cried out.”*

Flavius Josephus, the Pharisee, wrote a work called ‘***Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades***’. Some scholars these days attribute the work to the church father Hippolytus but the fact that Jesus told a very similar parable indicates that the story existed long before the church father.

In his work, Josephus explained that **Hades** was a **subterranean region** that has **two compartments**. One compartment or region contained a lake of unquenchable **everlasting fire** and the other the ‘**Bosom of Abraham**’.

According to this view when the wicked and the righteous died, they were taken down a descent where there was a gate guarded by an archangel accompanied by a host of angels. At the gate, the angels took the wicked to the compartment on the **left side** where there was a lake of unquenchable fire. There they were to suffer **everlasting punishment**.

On the other hand, the angels guided the righteous to the compartment on the **right side** where the **Bosom of Abraham** was located. There was a **great gulf**

between the two regions that made it impossible for the righteous to pass to the region of the wicked or the wicked to the region of the righteous. Clearly, Jesus was referring to the beliefs of the Pharisees.

The Dead are in their Graves

Jesus elsewhere made it clear that He did not believe in the theology of His parable. According to Jesus, both the righteous and the wicked remain in the tomb until the resurrection. If the righteous go to heaven and the wicked go to hell at death, why will Jesus call them forth from the grave when He comes?

John 5:28, 29:

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Hell is at the End of the Age

According to the Scriptures, the wicked will suffer the punishment of fire at the end of the age and never at the moment of death. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is the lone exception because Jesus was using the beliefs of the Pharisees to make a point.

Jesus did not contradict His own testimony in other parables or the teaching of the rest of the New Testament. Notice the following examples.

Matthew 13:40-43:

*“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather [*the angels gather the wicked, not at death, but at the end of the world*] out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ⁴² and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing*

of teeth. ⁴³ **Then [not at death]** shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”

According to **Josephus** the angels gather the righteous and wicked when they die. However, Jesus said it happens at the **end of the age**. At the end of the age there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth, not the moment of death.

Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46:

“When the Son of Man **comes in His glory**, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will **separate them** one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His **right** hand, but the goats on the **left**. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the **left** hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the **everlasting fire** prepared for the **devil and his angels**. ⁴⁶ "And these will go away into **everlasting punishment** [we will discuss this in our next lecture], but the righteous into **eternal life**.”

Josephus contradicted the testimony of Jesus by saying that the angels take the righteous and the wicked to the right or and to the left side when they die and not at the end of the age.

Revelation 21:8:

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars **shall have** their part in the **lake which burns with fire and brimstone**, which is the **second death**.”

Clearly, God casts the wicked into the fire, not when they **die the first** (physical) **death** but when they suffer the **second death** after the millennium.

Revelation 20:11-15:

*“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, **standing before God**, and **books were opened**. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life and the **dead were judged** according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them and **they were judged**, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And **anyone not found written** in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

These verses describe the millennial and post-millennial judgments of the wicked. God judges them and then casts them into the lake of fire. If He cast them into the fire at death, then He punished them without due process. Everyone deserves his or her day in court. God does not punish any of the wicked without first judging them and He will judge them after the millennium not at death.

There are other texts as well that describe the destruction of the wicked in the lake of fire at the end of the age: Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 Peter 3:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

The Bosom of Abraham

Matthew 24:31:

Do the angels **literally carry** the righteous to **Abraham's Bosom** when a person dies? Matthew 24:31 (as well as 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:1; John 14:1-3) tells us that the angels will gather God's elect at the second coming—not at death—to take them to heaven:

*“And He will send **His angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

No Communication with the Dead

There is another insurmountable problem with the Protestant view of this parable. In the Bible, God strictly forbids the living from attempting to communicate with the dead. However, in the parable, Abraham and the dead rich man are conversing. The rich man even pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers from the dead!

The Mosaic legislation strictly forbade the attempt to communicate with the dead:

Leviticus 20:27:

*“A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be **put to death**; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.”*

To consult the spirits of the dead means not to consult God:

Isaiah 8:19, 20:

*“And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people **seek their God**? Should they seek **the dead on behalf of the living**? ²⁰ To the **law** and to the **testimony**! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is **no light in them**.”*

So why does the rich man speak with Abraham and Abraham with the rich man while both were dead? Why does the rich man ask Abraham to send Lazarus from the dead to speak to his five brothers?

The Dead are in the Grave

Furthermore, the Bible clearly teaches that the dead are in their graves and they know nothing:

Ecclesiastes 9:5:

*"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."*

The rich man **died** and was **buried**. If he was dead and knew nothing, how could he carry on a conversation with Abraham?

Luke 16:22:

*"So it was that the beggar **died**, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man **also died** and was **buried**."*

Genesis 3:19:

*"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for **dust** you are, and to **dust** you shall **return**."*

Body Parts

When someone dies, they go to the grave with all their body parts and then return to dust. I have done **dozens of funerals** and can vouch for this fact! That being the case, what was the rich man doing in hell with all his body parts? Furthermore, what was Lazarus doing in the bosom of Abraham with all his body parts?

Luke 16:23:

*"And being in torments in **Hades**, he lifted up his **eyes** and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."*

Luke 16:24:

*"Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his **finger** in water and cool my **tongue**; for I am tormented in this flame.'"*

The Bible refers to body parts in hell only at the **end of the age**:

Matthew 5:29, 30:

*"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your **whole body** to be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your **whole body** to be cast into hell."*

The fact is that if both the rich man and Lazarus had body parts after death. If the body is not cast into the fire until the end of the age, then this story **must be describing what will happen at the end of the age** and not something that happened immediately after death.

A Startling Admission

The late **Robert Morey**, a close associate of Walter Martin and a staunch believer and defender of the immortality of the soul, made a remarkable admission:

*"Everyone understood that these parables and dialogues **did not literally take place**. It was understood that the rabbis used **imaginative stories** and dialogues as a teaching method. It was understood by all that these dialogues **never took place**. . . He [Jesus] was merely using the dialogue method to get across the concept that there is no escape from torment, no second chance, and we must believe the Scripture in this life unto salvation." Robert Morey, Death and the Afterlife, p. 85.*

What a candid admission. The **only story** in the Bible that **appears** to teach conscious torment in the flames of hell at the very **moment of death** and it **never** actually took place!

The Rich Man

In the parable, both the rich man and Lazarus symbolize groups of people. The rich man represents the Jewish nation and Lazarus represents the Gentiles:

The rich man represents the **Jewish nation**, more specifically, the **Pharisees**. The bosom represents closeness and intimacy (see John 13:23; Deuteronomy 13:6). The Pharisees, more than any other Jewish sect, claimed a particular closeness to Abraham as their father. The intimacy of Jesus with His Father is described as Jesus being in the bosom of the Father:

John 1:18:

*“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the **bosom of the Father**, He has declared Him.”*

The **rich man**, representing the Pharisees, claimed an **intimate closeness** to Abraham. In fact, all his hopes were centered **on Abraham**, not in God. The rich man had **five brothers**. Perhaps they represent the **Scribes**, the **Sadducees**, the **Herodians**, the **Zealots** and the **Essenes** (verse 31).

These brothers **had Moses and the prophets** so they must have been Jews (John 5:45-46). Contrary to the explicit legislation in the writings of Moses, the rich man, representing the Pharisees, believed in the immortality of the soul.

The details of the parable indicate that the rich man represents the Jewish nation generally and the Pharisees specifically:

Luke 16:24, 25, 27, 30:

*"Then he cried and said, '**Father Abraham**, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, '**Son**, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁷ Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, **father**, that you would send him to **my father's house**, ²⁸ for I have five brothers that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have **Moses and the prophets**; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, **father Abraham**; but if one goes to them **from the dead**, they will repent.'"*

A group of Jews told that Jesus that Abraham was their father:

John 8:39:

*"They answered and said to Him, '**Abraham is our father**.'"*

Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection

The rich man believed in the immortality of the soul. The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus from the dead to speak to his five brothers:

Luke 16:30:

*"And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them **from the dead**, they will repent.'"*

However, **Abraham** believed in the **resurrection of the dead**:

Luke 16:31:

*"And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them **from the dead**, they will repent.'"* But he [**Abraham**] said to him [**to the rich man**], 'If they do not

hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one **rise from the dead.**' "

The expression 'rise from the dead' refers to the resurrection. The rich man wanted Lazarus to go to Abraham **from the dead** but Abraham told him that Lazarus could only go if he resurrected from the dead:

Luke 24:46:

*"Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to **rise from the dead** the third day."*

Lazarus Represents the Gentiles

There are certain key words that we need to remember, crumbs, dogs and table:

Luke 16:19-21:

*"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the **crumbs** that fell from the **rich man's table**. Moreover, the **dogs** came and licked his sores."*

On a certain occasion Canaanite woman begged Jesus to heal her daughter who was gravely ill. The key words of the parable appear in the woman's response to Jesus:

Matthew 15:26, 27:

*"But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little **dogs**." ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little **dogs** eat the **crumbs** which fall from their **masters' table**."*

Adding to the Biblical Text

Those who believe in the immortality of the soul embellish the parable of Jesus in the following way:

Luke 16:22-25:

*"So it was that the beggar died and **[immediately his soul]** was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and **[his body but not his soul]** was buried. ²³ And being in torments in **[the everlasting flames of]** Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw **[the immortal soul of]** Abraham afar off, and **[the immortal soul of]** Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ Then **[his soul]** cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on **[my immortal soul]** me, and send **[the immortal soul of]** Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for **[my immortal soul]** I am tormented in this **[everlasting]** flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham's **[immortal soul]** said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now **[his immortal soul]** is comforted and **[your immortal soul]** is tormented."*

The Purpose of the Parable

We are now ready to understand why Jesus used the proper name of 'Lazarus' in this story. Jesus predicted that the Pharisees would not believe in Jesus even if He raised someone called Lazarus. They would not believe because they did not believe Moses and the prophets:

Luke 16:31:

*"But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though **one rise from the dead.**' "*

Less than a **month later**, Jesus resurrected a man **named Lazarus**:

John 11:43, 44:

*"Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come forth!**" ⁴⁴ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes,*

and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

How did the **Pharisees react** when they heard that a man named Lazarus resurrected from the dead? **Did they believe in Jesus?** The answer is that they refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and even pronounced a death decree against Him:

John 11:46-50:

*"But some of them went away to the **Pharisees** and told them the things Jesus did. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the **Pharisees** gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let Him alone like this, everyone will **believe in Him**, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." ⁴⁹ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that **one man should die** for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."*

The Pharisees also plotted to kill Lazarus:

John 12:9, 10:

*"Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests plotted to **put Lazarus to death also**, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews went away and **believed in Jesus**."*

John 12:19:

*"The **Pharisees** therefore said among themselves: "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the **world has gone after Him!**"*

In the woes on the scribes and **Pharisees** Jesus asked how the Scribes and Pharisees would ever escape the condemnation of **hell**:

Matthew 23:23:

*“**Serpents**, brood of **vipers**! How can you escape the condemnation of **hell**?”*

The wailing and gnashing of teeth was fulfilled literally when Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 AD:

Matthew 22:7:

*“But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and **burned up their city**.”*

However, the parable is to have a greater fulfillment. At the **end of the age** Jesus predicted that the sons of the kingdom would be cast out into outer darkness where there will be **wailing** and **gnashing of teeth**:

Matthew 8:11, 12:

*“And I say to you that many **will** come from east and west, and sit down with **Abraham**, Isaac, and Jacob in the **kingdom of heaven**.¹² However, the **sons of the kingdom** will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.”*

Luke 13:28:

*“There **will** be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see **Abraham** and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets **in the kingdom of God**, and yourselves **thrust out**.”*



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #14 – ALL LIVE TO HIM

The Sadducees and the Resurrection

Jesus not only had theological battles with the Pharisees. The Sadducees also attempted to entrap Jesus in insolvable dilemmas. The apostle Paul documented that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection:

Acts 23:7-9:

*“And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For **Sadducees** say that there is **no resurrection**—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”*

Ellen White echoes the words of the apostle Paul:

*“The Sadducees denied the existence of angels, the **resurrection of the dead**, and the doctrine of a future life, with its rewards and punishments” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 603*

There were **two reasons** why the Sadducees **did not believe** in the resurrection:

The first reason is because it was contrary to **observable scientific principles**. It was the same principle that **liberal theologians** use today to discard miracles, the principle of **analogy**. Their view is that if we cannot observe **resurrections** from the dead **today**, then we cannot believe that they happened in the past. In their view, it was **impossible for a decomposed** body to come to life. That is to say, the Sadducees did not believe in the **power of God**.

*“They did not believe in a resurrection of the dead. Producing **so-called science**, they had reasoned that it would be an impossibility for a dead body to be brought to life.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 537, 538.*

The **second reason** why the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead is that, according to them, there is no reference to this doctrine in the **law of Moses**. Therefore, in their minds, the doctrine was **heretical**.

*“... the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, for we do not find resurrection taught explicitly in the **first five books** of the Bible. Yet, we do find it there implicitly, or by good and necessary consequence, as Jesus will show us in due course (Mark 12:25–27).” R. C. Sproul, Ligonier Ministries, ‘The Sadducees ask about Marriage.’*

This is the reason why Jesus took a biblical example from Exodus 3 to prove that the Sadducees did not even understand the writings of Moses. If Jesus had chosen proof from **other Old Testament** sources the Sadducees would have rejected His **argument outright**.

A Hypothetical Case

These enemies of Jesus attempted to **ridicule** the doctrine of the resurrection with the preposterous **hypothetical case** of the **seven brothers** that married the **same woman**. After telling their story, they asked Jesus whose wife she

would be in the resurrection. Notably, they used **Mosaic legislation** as the foundation for the multiple marriages.

Luke 20:27-33:

*"Then some of the Sadducees, who **deny that there is a resurrection**, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁸ saying: "Teacher, **Moses wrote** to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were **seven brothers** and the first took a wife, and died without children. ³⁰ And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. ³¹ Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. ³² Last of all the woman died also. ³³ Therefore, in the resurrection, **whose wife does she become?** For all seven had her as wife."*

The Response of Jesus

Jesus responded that they were mistaken for **two reasons**. Luke does not mention the two reasons but **Matthew does**:

Matthew 22:29:

*"Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the **[1] Scriptures** nor the **[2] power of God**."*

Jesus responded by making **three points**:

- ✓ In the life to come there will be **no marriage** because we will be like the **angels** that do not marry nor are given in marriage. In other words, your example is **irrelevant** because neither the seven brothers nor the woman will be married in the kingdom come. Jesus, bringing up the existence of angels would be controversial in itself!

- ✓ God has the **omnipotent power** to raise the dead.

- ✓ The **Torah** (the law of Moses that the Sadducees revered) teaches the resurrection of the dead.

Luke 20:33-38:

*"Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of **this age** marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵ But those who are counted worthy to attain **that age**, and the **resurrection** from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; ³⁶ nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to **the angels** and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷ But **even Moses [whom they revered]** showed in the burning bush passage that the **dead are raised**, [not the immortality of the soul] when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' ³⁸ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for **all live to Him**."*

Some Protestant interpreters have taken the words of Jesus to mean that the disembodied souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive at the very moment that Jesus spoke although their bodies were still in the grave because Jesus said that 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living'. However, the expression 'all live to Him' at the end of verse 38 proves otherwise.

Let us notice an Ellen White quotation where she uses the **identical expression** 'live unto Him':

*"God counts the things that are not **as though they were**. He sees the end from the beginning, and beholds the **result** of His work as though it **were now accomplished**. The precious dead, from Adam down to the last saint who dies, will hear the voice of the Son of God, and will come forth from the grave to immortal life. God will be their God, and they shall be His people. There will be a close and tender relationship between God and the risen saints. This condition, which is anticipated in His purpose, **He beholds** as if it were **already existing**. The dead **live unto Him [not unto us]**. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 606*

God and Past, Present and Future

For us time-bound creatures that which **has been done** and that which **will be done** are two **different** things. What **has been done** is past and what is **yet to be done** is future.

However, God is **not time bound** as we are. That which for us is **potential** and **future** for God is **actual** and **present**! For God, potentiality is actuality! That is to say, in the mind of God, things exist before they come into actual existence!

Although time is important for God, in contrast to us, He lives, as it were, in an eternal present. After all, He is the great 'I AM' not the great 'I was' or the great 'I will be'!

Let us notice first the verse that Jesus quoted from **Exodus 3**:

Exodus 3:6, 13, 14:

*"Moreover, He said, '**I am the God** of your father—the God of **Abraham**, the God of **Isaac**, and the God of **Jacob**'" and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. ¹³ Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?' ¹⁴ And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM.**" And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'"*

Ellen White explained the meaning of 'I AM':

*"I AM means an **eternal presence**; [contrary to us.] the **past, present, and future** are **alike to God** [they are not alike to us. We distinguish between them]. He **sees** the most remote events of **past history** and the **far distant** future with **as clear a vision** as we do those things that **are transpiring daily**." Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 14, pp. 22, 23*

Although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead when Jesus spoke to the Sadducees, for God they were alive because God, as the 'I AM', lives in an eternal present.

Example: The Father of Nations

Let us examine another example. God told Abraham before the birth of Isaac, that He **had** made him the father of many nations. However, Abraham was not at that point the father of many nations. Yet God spoke **as though** it was an already **accomplished fact**.

Genesis 17:4, 5:

*"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with **you**, and **you shall be [from Abraham's perspective] a father of many nations.** ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for **I have made you [from God's perspective] a father of many nations.**"*

Paul picked up on this in the book of **Romans**:

Romans 4:17:

*"As it is written, "I **have made you** the father of many nations". He is our father in the presence of God whom he believed - the God who makes the **dead alive [because Hebrews 11:12 states that Abraham was as good as dead at that point]** and summons the things that **do not yet exist** as though they **already do.**"*

Let's examine two other translations that make the sense clearer:

New English Translation:

*"(as it is written, "I **have made you** the father of many nations"). He is our father in the presence of God whom he believed—the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that **do not yet exist as though they already do.**"*

Weymouth:

*"Thus in the **sight of God** [**'all live to Him'**] in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and makes reference to things that **do not exist, as though they did**, Abraham is the forefather of all of us. As it is written, "I have appointed you to be the forefather of many nations."*

The Presbyterian Bible commentator, **Albert Barnes** wrote:

*"That is, those things which he foretells and promises are **so certain**, that he may speak of them as **already in existence**. Thus, in relation to Abraham, God, instead of simply promising that he would make him the father of many nations, speaks of it **as already done**, 'I have made thee,' etc. **In his own mind**, or purpose, he had so constituted him, and it was **so certain** that it would take place, that he might speak of it **as already done**." *Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database, Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.**

The Lamb Slain

This helps us understand in what sense Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8:

*"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb **slain from the foundation of the world**."*

*"The plan of salvation had been **laid before** the creation of the earth, for Christ is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'" Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63*

1 Peter 1:20:

*"He indeed **was foreordained before** the foundation of the world [**from God's perspective**], but was **manifest** in these last times for you [**from our**"]*

perspective].”

Titus 1:2, 3:

*“in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised **before time began [from God’s perspective]**, ³ but has in **due time manifested [from our perspective]** His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior.”*

For us time-bound creatures, Jesus died on a **Friday afternoon** in 31 AD. However, God did not have to wait for Jesus to die on the cross for it to be a reality. In His infinite mind, the death of Christ was already a given fact in eternity past. In His mind, potentiality was actuality.

The Foreknowledge of God

The idea of a God who lives in an **eternal present** also helps us understand how the names of God’s faithful children were written in the book of life from **the foundation of the world** while those of the wicked were not. Referring to those who will marvel after the beast, John wrote:

Revelation 17:8:

*“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are **not written [perfect tense, ‘have not been written’]** in the Book of Life **from the foundation of the world**, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”*

If the names of the saved are already written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, why does Ellen White state that God writes them in the book of life at their baptism? Here is Ellen White’s statement:

*“Let those who received the imprint of God **by baptism** heed these words, remembering that upon them the Lord has **placed His signature**, declaring them*

to be His **sons and daughters**. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers infinite and omniscient, receive those who truly enter into covenant relation with God. They are present at every baptism, to receive the candidates who have renounced the world and have received Christ into the soul temple. These candidates have entered into the **family of God**, and their **names are inscribed** in the Lamb's book of life." Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 143

This seeming contradiction between Revelation 13:8 and Ellen White's statement is resolved when we recognize that Revelation 13:8 refers to God's eternal foreknowledge about who would be saved and Ellen White's statement refers the moment when the saved chose to act out what was eternally in the mind of God.

Throughout eternity, God foreknew **who would choose** to accept the atonement and those who would not. In other words, God from eternity past the choices that people would make but He did not make those choices for them.

God did not say in heaven: "By divine decree I chose one group to be saved and the other to be lost." God simply knew who would choose Him and having that foreknowledge, He elected them.

There is a difference between predestination and pre-determination. God predestined us to salvation because He foreknew the choice that we would make. God predestined us based on **our choice, not His**. The apostle Peter wrote that God elected individuals on the basis of His foreknowledge of the choices that they would make.

The word 'foreknowledge' appears two times in the New Testament (*prognosis*—1 Peter 1:2; Acts 2:23) and a related word appears five times (*proginosko*—Acts 26:5; Romans 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:17). The root word of both is *prognosis*. What is the meaning of this word? In Greek it means 'knowing something in advance'. In English the word means 'a forecast of

the likely outcome of a situation'. In the case of God, we can eliminate the word 'likely'.

The apostle Peter explained that God elected the saved 'according to the foreknowledge of the Father'. In other words, the Father elected those whom He foreknew would choose salvation.

1 Peter 1:1, 2:

*"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² **elect** according to the **foreknowledge** [**prognosis**] of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied."*

Some are puzzled by the verse where God says before Jacob and Esau were born that the older would serve the younger. This sounds like God determined it that way. However, God did not arbitrarily choose Jacob and reject Esau, but rather foreknew what their choices would be.

Romans 9:10-13:

*"And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for the children **not yet being born**, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to **election might stand**, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."*

God predicted that **Judas** would betray Jesus over one thousand years before it happened; but God did not pre-determine it so:

Acts 1:20:

"For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.'

God did not force Judas to betray Jesus. It would not be fair for God to condemn a person for acting out that in which the person had no choice!

Here is how it works: Imagine that you are the conductor of a train and you come to a place where the tracks divide into a right and left track. There are two ways that the train can turn to one or the other track. The tracks can be switched by someone in a booth outside the train. In that case, the conductor has no choice as to which track the train will go. On the other hand, the switch can be made by the conductor of the train from inside the train. In that case the conductor does have a choice. So to speak, God knows beforehand whether we will choose the salvation or perdition track but he does not choose for us.

The apostle Paul wrote that God chose us from the foundation of the world and predestined us to adoption according to the good pleasure of His will:

Ephesians 1:4, 5:

*“just as **He chose us** in Him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having **predestined us** to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **good pleasure of His will**, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

God foreknew what our choice could be and therefore predestined us for salvation:

Romans 8:29:

*“For whom **He foreknew**, He also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He **predestined**, these **He also called**; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”*

Ellen White once explained how the ministry of men and women existed in the mind of God, before it actually existed:

*“In the **mind of God**, the ministry of men and women **existed** [notice the past tense] before the world was created.” Ellen G. White, Diary Entry for Sunday, March 15, 1891, [also found in: Manuscript Releases, volume 18, p. 380]*

Job’s Glorious Hope

As we close this chapter, let’s take a look at one of the great resurrection passages of the Old Testament:

Job 14:10-15, NIV:

*“But man **dies** and is laid low; he **breathes his last** and **is no more**.¹¹ As **water disappears** from the sea or a **riverbed becomes parched** and dry,¹² so man lies down and does not rise; **till the heavens are no more**, men will not **awake** or be roused from their **sleep**.¹³ ‘If only you would **hide me in the grave [Sheol]** and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then **remember me!**¹⁴ If a man **dies**, will he **live again?** All the days of my hard labor I will wait for my **renewal** to come.¹⁵ You will **call** and I will **answer** you; you will **long for the creature** your hands have made.”*

The word ‘renewal’ in verse 14 appears twelve times in the Old Testament and in most cases refers to a change of garments. This brings to mind 1Corinthians 15 where this mortal must be clothed with immortality and this mortal must be clothed with immortality—see also Genesis 45:22.

In this passage ‘sleep’ and ‘awake’ are synonymous with ‘die’ and ‘live again’. Jesus will call and the dead will answer because God longs for us.

1 Corinthians 15:51-55:

*“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be **changed**—⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trumpet**. For the **trumpet***

will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be **changed**.⁵³ For this corruptible **must put** on incorruption, and this mortal must **put on** immortality.⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has **put on** incorruption, and this mortal has **put on** immortality then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Importance of Being in Christ

When Jesus comes His voice will sound like the blast of **a trumpet**:

Revelation 1:10-11:

*"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a **loud voice**, as of a **trumpet**,¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

Those who are in the graves will hear His voice:

John 5:28-29:

*"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves **will hear His voice**²⁹ and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*

Those who are in Christ will resurrect at the sound of His voice:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the **voice** of an archangel, and with the **trumpet of God**. And the dead **in Christ** will rise first."*

At baptism we are **included in Christ**. It is the incorporation ceremony into the family of God. When we repent of our sins, confess them are born again and are baptized, we die with Him, are buried with Him, resurrect with Him and sit at the right hand of God with Him:

Galatians 3:26-28:

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized **into Christ** have **put on** Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #15 – UNDYING WORM AND UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

Misinterpreted Texts

In this lesson, we are going to study several Bible verses that might leave the impression that the wicked will suffer without end in the fires of hell. Here are some of them:

Matthew 25:41:

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Matthew 25:46:

“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

2 Thessalonians 1:9, 10:

“These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Mark 9:43-48:

*"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to **hell [geéna]**, into the fire that shall **never [not in the original. Literally it says 'the unquenchable fire']** be quenched—⁴⁴ where **'Their** worm **does** not die, and the fire **is** not quenched.'*

Revelation 20:10:

*"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the **lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet are **[were cast]**. And they will be **tormented** day and night **forever and ever.**"*

Solving the Problem of the Everlasting Fire

Let's begin our study by considering the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. When God destroyed these cities, He rained fire from heaven and the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace:

Genesis 19:24, 28:

*"Then the LORD rained **brimstone and fire** on Sodom and Gomorrah, **from the LORD out of the heavens.** ²⁸ Then he [Abraham] looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the **smoke** of the land which **went up** like the smoke of a furnace."*

The fire that destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and the cities of the plain was **eternal fire**:

Jude 7:

*"... as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire.**"*

However, Sodom, Gomorrah and the cities of the plain are **not burning today**. In fact, the Bible tells us that they **became ashes**:

2 Peter 2:6:

*“... and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah **into ashes**, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.”*

How do we explain that God destroyed the cities with eternal fire and yet the fire **no longer burns**? The answer is that **God** is the **consuming fire**:

Deuteronomy 4:23, 24:

*“Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the LORD your **God is a consuming fire**, a jealous God.”*

The New Testament refers to God in the same manner:

Hebrews 12:28, 29:

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our **God is a consuming fire**.”*

Obviously, God is not a fire, literally speaking. **God’s glory** is the consuming fire:

Exodus 24:15-17:

*“Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ Now the **glory of the LORD** rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷*

The sight of the **glory of the LORD** was **like a consuming fire** on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.”

The sea of glass mingled with fire before God’s throne is so because **God’s glory shines** on the sea:

Revelation 15:2:

*“And I saw something **like a sea of glass mingled with fire**, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.”*

Ellen White made this incisive statement about the fire as the glory of God:

*“To sin, wherever found, “our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrew 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. However, if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the **glory of God**, which destroys sin, must destroy them. Jacob, after his night of wrestling with the Angel, exclaimed, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Genesis 32: 30. Jacob had been guilty of a great sin in his conduct toward Esau; but he had repented. His transgression had been forgiven, and his sin purged; therefore, he could endure the **revelation of God’s presence**. However, wherever men came before God while **willfully cherishing evil**, they were destroyed. At the second advent of Christ, the wicked shall be consumed ‘with the Spirit of His mouth,’ and destroyed ‘with the brightness of His coming.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The **light of the glory of God**, which imparts life to the righteous, will **slay the wicked**.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 107, 108*

Here is a review of the Meaning of the Problem Texts:

- ✓ **Everlasting fire**: The fire does not go out because God’s glory is the fire and His glory is eternal. However, what the fire consumes is extinguished.

- ✓ **Everlasting punishment**: The punishment of the wicked is eternal because they die and never live again. In other words, the result of their punishment is eternal, not the process.
- ✓ **Everlasting destruction**: The process of destruction is not eternal but rather the result. The destruction of the wicked by the fire is permanent. They will remain destroyed forever.

What about the ‘Unquenchable Fire’?

However, what is the meaning of the expression ‘unquenchable fire’ in Mark 9:43-48? Does it mean that the fire will never go out? The word is *asbestos* and it means ‘fire that no one can extinguish’ while it consumes what is burning.

Unfortunately, some modern versions translate the word ‘asbestos’ as ‘the fire that never goes out’. It is true that the fire that consumes the wicked will never go out because God is the consuming fire. However, that which the fire consumes will go out. Matthew 3:12 uses the same word as the passage in Mark. Regarding the mission of the Messiah, John the Baptist announced:

Matthew 3:12:

*“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the **chaff** with **unquenchable fire**.”*

- ✓ Unquenchable fire destroyed the **Branch Davidian** complex in **Waco**—it was impossible to extinguish the fire until it reduced everything to ashes.
- ✓ Unquenchable fire destroyed the **Battle Creek Sanitarium** in 1903. **Fire chief Weeks** remarked that ‘the water worked more like gasoline’.

- ✓ The church historian **Eusebius** wrote about **Chronium**, **Julian**, **Epinachus** and **Alexander** who suffered a martyr's death with unquenchable fire.
- ✓ Unquenchable fire is fire that no one can **extinguished** until it has **consumed everything** there is to consume.

The Fire Devours the Wicked

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the fire of God's glory **will consume** the wicked until there is nothing left. Neither root nor branch will remain:

Malachi 4:1-3:

*"For behold, the day is coming, **burning like an oven**, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be **stubble**. And the day which is coming **shall burn them up**," says the LORD of hosts, "That will **leave them neither root nor branch**.² But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.³ You shall trample the wicked, for they **shall be ashes** under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the LORD of hosts."*

The book of Revelation states that the fire will **devour** the wicked:

Revelation 20:9:

*"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and **devoured** them."*

The word 'devoured' in the New Testament describes the consumption of something until there is none left as we can see, for example, in Matthew 13:4.

Matthew 13:4 (see also Luke 15:30; John 2:17; Revelation 10:9, 10; 11:5; 12:4);

*“And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and **devoured** them.”*

Second death does not mean eternal torment but rather a death from which there is no resurrection:

Revelation 21:8:

*“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with **fire and brimstone**, which is the **second death**.”*

Everyone on earth is born the first time from a mother. When life comes to an end, persons die the first death. When righteous persons resurrect from the first death to live again, they will die no more. When wicked persons resurrect, they will live for a second time only to die the death from which there is no resurrection.

The Righteous will live in the Everlasting Fire

Virtually all Christians today believe that the wicked will suffer in the **flames of hell** for eternity. It must be surprising for them to discover that the righteous, not the wicked, will live eternally with the fire. By the context we can see that the righteous have developed a fireproof character:

Isaiah 33:14, 15:

*“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “**Who** among us shall dwell with the **devouring fire**? **Who** among us shall dwell with **everlasting burnings**?”¹⁵ He who walks righteously and speaks he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil.”*

How Long will the Wicked Suffer in the Fire?

Jesus said that some servants who did not do the will of their master will suffer more and others less:

Luke 12:47, 48:

*"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with **many** stripes. ⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with **few**. For everyone to whom **much is given**, from him **much will be required**; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."*

After the millennium, the reward of the wicked will be according to their works:

Revelation 20:13:

*"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one **according to his works**."*

Would a **common sinner** who did not accept Christ but lived a moral life, deserve the same punishment as **Adolph Hitler**? Would it be just for a judge to punish a **traffic violation** and **murder** with the same sentence?

Isaiah 66:24: The wicked will not be consumed instantaneously; they will burn outside the city for much longer than what we have generally assumed:

*"**And** they shall go forth and look upon the corpses [**carcasses**] of the men who have transgressed against Me for their worm **does not die**, and their fire **is not quenched**. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."*

The Greatest Misinterpreted Text

This brings us to our most Misinterpreted text on the nature of hellfire:

Revelation 20:10:

*“The devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of **fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet are **[the word ‘are’ is not in the Greek text]** and they will be **tormented** day and night **forever and ever.**”*

The source for Revelation 20:10 is in Isaiah 34. Referring to the destruction of **Edom**, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 34:9, 10:

*“Its streams shall be turned into **pitch**, and its dust into **brimstone**; its land shall become **burning pitch**.¹⁰ It shall **not be quenched night or day**; its smoke shall ascend **forever**. From generation to generation it **shall lie waste**; no one shall pass through it **forever and ever.**”*

Both the Hebrew and Greek words ‘forever’ refer to a **long and indefinite** period whose end cannot be discerned. However, after the long period, the fire **does go out**. The expression in Revelation 20:10 literally says, *‘for the ages of the ages.’* In Spanish it is translated *‘por los siglos de los siglos.’*

For a period, the wicked will suffer **conscious torment**. The Greek word ‘torment’ is *basanizo* and there is no doubt that it refers to conscious torment. For example, Revelation 12:2 uses it to describe birth pangs. Clearly, the woman who is in travail is consciously feeling the pain of childbirth.

In Matthew 8:29 the evil spirits ask Jesus whether he has come to torment them before their time. Once again, the idea is one of conscious torment and suffering. Here the spirits are referring perhaps to their final punishment in the fires of hell.

We find a significant use of the word *basanizo* in Revelation 9:5 where the scorpions from the abyss get the command to torment men for five months. Conscious torture is meant because the scorpions **do not kill** but rather inflict pain and torment.

In **Revelation 18:7, 10, 15** the word describes the pain and anguish that Babylon will feel when she falls. There can be no doubt that these verses refer to conscious torment.

It is clear that the word *basanizo* in Revelation 20:10 is graphically describing the future **conscious torment** of Satan in the fires of hell. Up to here, there is no problem because the Bible consistently teaches that Satan and his angels will suffer conscious torment in the post-millennial lake of fire (cf. Matthew 25:41). However, a serious problem surfaces when we realize that Revelation 20:10 states that this torment will last ‘forever and ever’. Are we to understand that the pain and anguish of Satan is to last forever, that is to say, shall never cease?

Perhaps it would be a good idea to examine the meaning of the word ‘forever’ in the New Testament. Several non-Adventist scholars have weighed in to explain that the word *olam* in the Old Testament and the word *aion* in the New do not in themselves mean ‘without end.’ Let us take a look at some of their comments.

Allan Macrae, president and professor of Old Testament Theology at the Biblical School of Theology in **Hatfield, Pennsylvania** wrote:

*“The LXX generally translates **olam** by **aion** which has essentially the same range of meaning. That neither the Hebrew nor the Greek word itself contains the idea of **endlessness** is shown both by the fact that they sometimes refer to events or conditions that occurred at a definite point in the past and also by the fact that sometimes it is thought desirable to repeat the word, not merely saying ‘forever,’ but ‘forever and ever.” Allan Macrae, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, volume 2, pp. 672, 673.*

James Hope **Moulton** and George **Milligan** explained:

*“In general, the word depicts **that of which the horizon is not in view**, whether the horizon be at an **infinite distance** . . . or whether it lies **no further** that the span of a Caesar’s life.” The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), p. 16.*

Kittel’s Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament adds:

*“In the plural aion formulae the meaning of aion merges into that of a **long but limited stretch of time**. In particular, **aion** in this sense signifies the time or duration of the world, i. e., **time as limited by creation and conclusion**. At this point we are confronted by the remarkable fact that in the Bible the same word **aion is used to indicate two things which are profoundly antithetical, namely, the eternity of God and the duration of the world**. This twofold sense, which **aion** shares with the Hebrew **olam**, points back to a concept of eternity in which eternity is identified with the **duration of the world**.” Gerhard Kittel, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, volume 1, p. 202*

Satan will Burn out

Other texts in the Bible clearly point out that Satan will burn out after the fire has consumed all that there is to consume. When I say to my wife, ‘I will **love you forever and ever**’ it means ‘till death do us part!’

Satan and the wicked will **become ashes and be no more so** they cannot burn forever:

Ezekiel 28:18, 19:

*“You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it **devoured** you, and I **turned you to ashes** upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. ¹⁹ All who*

knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and **shall be no more forever.** " ' "

Malachi 4:1-3:

"For behold, the day is coming, **burning** like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be **stubble**. And the day which is coming shall **burn them up**," says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither **root** nor **branch**.² But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.³ You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be **ashes** under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the LORD of hosts."

The Testimony of Ellen G. White

Ellen White vividly described the millennial judgment of the wicked. I have included the Bible support for Ellen White's comments in brackets:

"Then I saw thrones, and Jesus and the redeemed saints sat upon them **[Revelation 20:4]**; and the saints reigned as kings and priests unto God **[Revelation 20:4]**. Christ, in union with His people, judged the wicked dead, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Word of God, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body **[Revelation 20:4, 11, 12]**. Then they meted out to the wicked **the portion** which they must suffer, **according to their works** **[1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:11, 12]**; and it was written against their names in the book of death. Satan also and his angels were judged by Jesus and the saints **[1Corinthians 6:3]**. **Satan's punishment was to be far greater [in terms of length and intensity]** than that of those whom he had deceived. His suffering would **so far exceed** theirs as to bear **no comparison** with it **[Revelation 20:10]**. After all those whom he had deceived had perished, Satan was still to live and **suffer on much longer.**" Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 290

Ellen White also described the destruction of the wicked after the millennium:

*"I saw that some were **quickly destroyed**, while others **suffered longer**. They were punished **according to the deeds done in the body**. Some [wicked persons] were **many days** consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the **sense of suffering [basanizo]** remained. Said the angel, 'The worm of life shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon [Mark 9:43-48].'*

Satan and his angels suffered long. Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of his own sins, but also of the sins of the redeemed host, which had been placed upon him; and he must also suffer for the ruin of souls which he had caused. Then I saw that Satan and all the wicked host **were consumed**, and the **justice of God** was satisfied [key point]; and all the angelic host and all the redeemed saints, with a loud voice said, "Amen!"

Said the angel, 'Satan is the **root**, his children are the **branches**. They are now **consumed** root and branch. They have died an **everlasting death**. They are **never to have a resurrection**, and God will have a **clean universe**.' Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 293, 294.

Here is how Ellen White describes the varying lengths of punishment according to works:

- ✓ Some wicked persons were **quickly consumed**.
- ✓ Other wicked persons suffered **many days**.
- ✓ Satan and His angels **suffered long**.
- ✓ Satan suffered **much longer**.

The Foundation of Ellen White's Remarks

Some might wonder where Ellen White got the idea that Satan would suffer much longer than the wicked. The answer is found in the sanctuary service on the Day of Atonement.

In the daily service, the record of sins entered the sanctuary through the blood of the sacrifice. However, at the end of the year, the sins that had entered by the blood were removed and placed on the head of the scapegoat:

Leviticus 16:7:

"He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

At the end of the Day of Atonement, the wicked were cut off from the congregation for their own sins. Not so for the scapegoat who bore the punishment for all the sins of the saved.

Leviticus 16:20-22:

"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat.²¹ Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man.²² The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."

Leviticus 23:29-30:

"For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people.³⁰ And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people."

God's Strange Act

The Bible portrays God as the Creator, the giver of life. So to speak, destruction is not in His DNA. The destruction of Satan, his angels and the wicked is God's strange act:

Isaiah 28:21:

"For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon--that He may do His work, His awesome [strange] work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual act."

"To our merciful God the act of punishment is a strange act." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 627

The fire falls on the earth where Satan, his angels and the wicked are gathered and therefore the fire cannot burn forever:

Revelation 20:7-10:

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven [remember Sodom and Gomorrah] and devoured them. ¹⁰ The devil who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [for a long, long time]."

The wicked cannot be burning on earth for eternity because God will make a new heavens and a new earth:

Revelation 21:3-5:

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

If there is no more death, how is it possible that the wicked will be suffering second death in the fires of hell for eternity? In this case, death would still exist! However, the apostle Paul wrote that death is the final enemy that God will wipe out.



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #16 – IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL OR RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Time and Matter Are Good

God created time and therefore time is good:

Genesis 1:5:

“God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.”

God created the heavenly bodies to mark time:

Genesis 1:14:

“Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.”

God created matter to form vegetation, birds, fish, land animals and man and woman:

Genesis 1:11:

*"Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth **grass**, the **herb** that yields seed, and the **fruit tree** that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so."*

Genesis 1:24:

*"Then God said, "Let **the earth bring forth** the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so."*

Genesis 2:7:

*"And the LORD God formed man of the **dust** of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*

Genesis 2:21, 23: God made the woman from the matter of man:

*"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his **ribs**, and closed up the **flesh** in its place. ²² Then the **rib** that the LORD God had taken from man He **made into a woman**, and He brought her to the man. ²³ And Adam said: "This is now **bone** of my bones and **flesh** of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."*

Genesis 1:31: At the end of the sixth day God declared time and matter very good:

*"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was **very good**. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day."*

Genesis 2:9:

If Adam and Eve obeyed God's command, **matter** would never deteriorate and they would live **forever**. The problem of time decaying matter is a post-lapsarian phenomenon.

Promise of Death in Case of Sin

The decay and death of material substance does not occur because time and matter are evil but rather because of sin:

Genesis 2:16, 17:

*"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall **surely die.**"*

Adam and Eve sinned and became subject to decay and death:

Genesis 3:6:

*"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, **she** took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and **he** ate."*

God deprived the human race from the privilege of eating the fruit of the tree of life:

Genesis 3:22-24:

*"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and **live forever**"—²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden and a flaming sword which turned every way, **to guard the way to the tree of life.**"*

Romans 5:12: Sin brought death:

*"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus **death spread to all men**, because **all sinned.**"*

Romans 6:23:

*“For the wages of sin is **death** . . .”*

Simple observation and the Second Law of Thermodynamics reveals an undeniable fact: The **passing of time deteriorates matter**. As time goes by, the body **wrinkles**, gets **old** and **sick**, and eventually **dies** and decomposes. This was **not God’s original plan**—it is the direct and inevitable result of **sin** acting upon matter. So, the solution is not to get rid of time and matter but rather of sin!

Not only were human being affected by sin but the entire creation suffered decay as a result:

Romans 8:19-24:

*“For the earnest expectation of **the creation eagerly waits** for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the **creation was subjected to futility, not willingly**, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the **creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the **whole creation groans and labors** with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the **redemption of our body**.”*

The Greek Philosophers and the Body Soul Relationship

Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato had **no special revelation** from God, but they were **keen observers**. They saw that the passing of **time deteriorates matter**. They also realized that **the material body** of man exhibits the **basest of evil passions**.

Therefore, they reached the conclusion that **time is evil** and the **body** (because it is composed of matter) **is evil** as well. They concluded that if humans could discard their material **bodies** and escape space and time then they could enter

a sphere where they could get rid of their **evil passions** and the inevitable **consequences of time and space**.

The Inner Contradiction in Man

Paul, the Greek philosophers, and others, wrote about this inner contradiction in human nature:

"I see the better things, and I agree with them, but I follow the worse." **Ovid**, *Metamorphoses*, 7:20

"Men love and hate their vices at the same time." **Seneca**, *Letters*, 112.3

"For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." **Paul**, Romans 7:19

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." **Paul**, Romans 7:20

"A perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind." **Wisdom of Solomon** 9:15

The Body as the Prison of the Soul

The Greek and Roman thinkers concluded that man is composed of two separable entities—the corruptible and mortal material body with all its vices, and the pure immaterial soul that resided inside the body:

- ✓ The **Orphic Jingle**: A common saying of the day was 'Soma Sema' ('the body is a sepulcher').
- ✓ **Epictetus**: *"I am ashamed to have a body. I am a "poor soul shackled to a corpse."* *Epictetus, Fragment 23*

- ✓ **Marcus Aurelius:** “Disdain the flesh, blood and bones and network, a twisted skein of nerves, veins and arteries.” Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 2.2
- ✓ **Plato:** “No man can be a lover of wisdom and a lover of the body.” Plato, Phaedo, 68C
- ✓ **Philo:** “The body is a prison and a corpse.” Philo of Alexandria, De Agricultura 5

Paul’s Dialogue with the Greek Philosophers at Athens

We can only imagine how difficult it must have been for the apostle Paul to reason with the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill. The apostle Paul believed in the resurrection of the material body while the philosophers believed in the immortality of the soul. The book of Acts tells us the story.

Acts 17:18:

“Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, “What does this babbler want to say?” Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.”

The record tells us that not all of Paul’s words were lost. While some mocked, others were willing to hear more:

Acts 17:32:

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this matter.”

The Greek philosophers could not understand how anyone in their right mind would want to have a material body.

The Biblical Concept of a Material Body

The Bible does not depreciate the body. In fact, it teaches that Jesus, of the very substance of God, took upon Himself a real material body of sinful human flesh.

John 1:14:

*“And the Word was **made flesh**, and dwelt **among us**, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*

Romans 8:3:

*“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the **likeness of sinful flesh**, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the **flesh**.”*

Even after the resurrection Jesus had a real material body of flesh and bones:

Luke 24:39:

*“Behold my **hands** and my **feet**, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not **flesh** and **bones**, as ye see **me have**.”*

So serious was the coming of Jesus in the flesh, that whoever taught the contrary had the spirit of the Antichrist:

1 John 4:3:

*“... and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come **in the flesh** is not of God. And this is the **spirit of the Antichrist**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”*

The Greek philosophers could conceive of great humans becoming gods after discarding the body. However, the idea of God taking on human flesh and dying on the cross was not only scandalous but foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). What

person in their right mind would want to take on human flesh? To the Greeks and Romans, the ideal was for the soul to leave the body.

Redemption of the Body

With the immortality of the soul mental block, it was virtually impossible for the Greek philosophers to believe in the Christian hope of the resurrection of the body. For the philosophers the great hope was not in the redemption of the body but in the deliverance of the soul from the prison of the body. On the other hand, the Bible concept is the redemption of the body from the curse of sin:

Romans 8:23:

*"Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves **groan within ourselves**, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the **redemption of our body**."*

There will be **matter and time** in the earth made new so time and matter in themselves are not evil. When the body has been redeemed, it will no longer be subject to decay and death:

Revelation 22:1, 2:

*"And he showed me a pure river of **water** of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the **tree** of life, which bore twelve **fruits**, each tree yielding its fruit every **month**. The **leaves** of the tree were for the healing of the nations."*

The weekly and monthly cycles of time will exist in the earth made new:

Isaiah 66:22, 23:

"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³ And it

shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.

Time and matter will exist in the earth made new but there will be no sin. Sin is what corrupts and deteriorates matter with the passing of time.

The Body Redeemed from Sin

1 Corinthians 15:51-54:

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Philippians 3:20, 21:

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

Fleshly Desires can be Subdued in this Life

Although in this life the material body deteriorates every day and will not be immortal and incorruptible until Jesus comes, it is possible to live a holy life even now in sinful flesh:

2 Corinthians 4:16:

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

Romans 8:5-9:

*“For those who live according to the **flesh** set their minds on the things of **the flesh**, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be **carnally minded** is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the **carnal mind** is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are **in the flesh** cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not **in the flesh** but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*

If we allow the Holy Spirit to mold our spirit (character/mind) then we will receive a new immortal and incorruptible body at the resurrection.

Romans 8:11:

*“But if the **Spirit** of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give **life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you.”*

Devastating Implications Soul Immortality

There are several devastating implications for those who believe in the immortality of the soul:

#1: The immortality of the soul doctrine **gives to humans the glory** that belongs exclusively to God (Revelation 14:7). The Bible tells us that inherent immortality belongs only to God as do His omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

The apostle Paul described God as ‘*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ **who alone** has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.*’ (1 Timothy 6:15, 16).

#2: The doctrine of the immortality of the soul makes **God a liar** (Genesis 2:16-17) and Satan a **truth teller** (Genesis 3:4). God told Adam and Eve that if they

ate from the tree they would **surely die**. However, Satan told them that they would **not surely die**.

#3: If the soul of man is immortal by nature, then why would **Jesus have to die** to give us what we already possess? (1 Corinthians 15:3)

#4: If our soul were what really matters in the sight of God, why would it be necessary to care for what we are going to discard at death? The Bible teaches that we are to care for the body because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Romans 12:1). The health of our spiritual nature depends to a great degree on the condition of our physical nature. Whatever degrades our physical nature degrades also our spiritual nature. Our capacity to understand the will of God and the strength to obey it depends on the health of the body:

*“The body is the **only medium** through which the **mind and the soul** are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence, it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of **the physical powers**. His success here means the surrender to evil of the whole being. The **tendencies of our physical nature**, unless under the dominion of a higher power, will surely work ruin and death.” Ellen G. White, Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 73*

#5: The doctrine of the immortality of the soul leads many to **lose a sense of urgency** for the second coming of Jesus. After all, if our soul goes to heaven to be with Jesus at death, why should we be **so concerned** about being with Him after the second coming? (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

#6: The doctrine of the immortality of the soul opens wide **the door of the church** to the manifestations of **Spiritism**. If souls go to heaven, what would prevent them from **coming back to earth** to communicate with the living? (Revelation 18:2-3)

The Purpose of Spiritualistic Manifestations

Nathaniel P. Tallmadge served as governor of the territory of Wisconsin and senator of the state of New York. Later in life, Tallmadge became a convert to spiritualism claiming that he was visited on a regular basis by the spirit of the defunct John C. Calhoun. In **1853**, Tallmadge received the following message from the purported spirit of **John C. Calhoun**.

*“My friend, often the question is asked: what good can come from these manifestations? I will respond: It is to **unite mankind in harmony** and to convince skeptics of the **immortality of the soul**.”*

Sir **Arthur Conan Doyle**, of Sherlock Holmes fame, was also a spiritualist. He once wrote about the objectives of Spiritism:

*“I believe that one of the ultimate results of this movement [**spiritualism**] will be to **unite Christianity** upon a common basis so strong and, indeed, self-sufficient that the **quibbles** which separate the churches today will be seen in their true light and proportion and will be **swept away** or disregarded.”*

Ellen White on the Ecumenical Implications of Spiritism

Remarkably, Ellen White agreed that these were the objectives of Spiritism:

*“The line of distinction between professed Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church members love what the world loves and are ready to join with them, and Satan determines to **unite them in one body** and thus strengthen his cause by **sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism**. **Papists**, who boast of miracles as a certain sign of the true church, will be readily deceived by this wonder-working power; and **Protestants**, having cast away the shield of truth, will be deluded. **Papists, Protestants, and worldlings** will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in **this union** a grand movement for the conversion of the world and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 588, 589*

Dare anyone say that this is not true?

- **Napoleon Hill** (Think and Grow Rich).
- **Norman Vincent Peale** (The Power of Positive Thinking).
- **Richard Bach** (Jonathan Livingston Seagull).
- **Benny Hinn** claiming to hear the voice of **Kathryn Kuhlman** speaking to him at Forrest Lawn Cemetery.
- **Pat Robertson** and religious leaders have said that out of body experiences and near death experiences are proof of life after death.
- **Billy Graham** once wrote to Christians:

*“...**you are an immortal soul**. Your **soul is eternal** and **will live forever**. In other words, the **real you**—the **part** of you that thinks, feels, dreams, aspires; the ego, the personality—will never die. ... your **soul will live forever** in one of two places—heaven or hell whether we are saved or lost, there is **conscious and everlasting** existence of the soul and personality.” (Billy Graham, *Peace With God*, chapter 6, paragraphs 25 and 28).*

- Emphasis on **angels as departed spirits** (Highway to Heaven)
- Movies such as **Lord of the Rings**, **Harry Potter**, **the Sixth Sense**, etc.
- Purported appearances and messages from the “**Virgin Mary**”
- Phenomenal growth of **Astrology**
- Programs on **television** where **psychics** claim to bring messages from the dead.
- Phenomenal growth of **New Age publications** and practices even in churches.
- Programs such as **Touched by Angel**.

Modern Spiritism in the United States began in **1848** when the **Fox sisters** in **Rochester**, New York began hearing some **mysterious rappings** by purported spirits of the dead on the wall of their home. After this, Ellen White wrote:

*"I saw the rapidity with which this delusion was **spreading**. A train of cars was shown me, going with the speed of lightning. The angel bade me look carefully. I fixed my eyes upon the train. It seemed that the **whole world was on board**, that there could not be one left. Said the angel, 'They are binding in bundles ready to burn.' Then he showed me **the conductor**, who appeared like a stately, fair person, whom all the **passengers looked up to and revered**. I was **perplexed** and asked my attending angel **who it was**. He said, "It is Satan. He is the conductor in the form of an angel of light. **He has taken the world captive**. They are given over to strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they may be damned. This agent, the next highest in order to him, is the engineer, and other of his agents are employed in different offices as he may need them, and they are all going with **lightning speed to perdition**."*

Ellen White wrote about the dangers of trusting our own **eyes**, our **ears**, our **feelings** and **emotions** in Satan's end time deceptions:

*"He has power to bring before men the **appearance of their departed friends**. The **counterfeit is perfect**; the familiar **look**, the **words**, the **tone**, are reproduced with **marvelous distinctness**. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear 'to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.'" Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 552.*

*"I saw that the saints must get **a thorough understanding of present truth**, which they will be obliged to maintain **from the Scriptures**. They must understand the **state of the dead**; for the spirits of devils will yet appear to them, professing to be **beloved friends and relatives**, who will declare to them that the Sabbath has been changed, also other unscriptural doctrines. They will do all in*

their power to excite sympathy and will work miracles before them to confirm what they declare.” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 87.

In **1958**, **Epworth Press** published a book that caused quite a stir in the Protestant world. The name of the book was “*Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?*” and its author was Lutheran theologian **Oscar Cullmann**. The small book broke with the traditional Protestant perspective that the soul of man is immortal and can consciously survive after death.

In the book, **Cullmann** draws a stark contrast between Jesus’ view of death and that of the Greek philosopher Socrates. As Jesus faced death with His disciples, he looked upon it as a deadly enemy and trembled before it. On the other hand, Socrates looked at death as a friend and encouraged his disciples to drink the hemlock in order to deliver the soul from the chains of the body and thus experience true freedom. Cullmann caught a lot of vitriol from Protestant academia but his view was biblical.

Where did the doctrine of the immortality of the soul come from? Certainly not from the Bible. It actually infiltrated the Jews from their contact with Greek philosophy in the diaspora and entered into the Christian Church when Christian scholars imbibed it from Hellenistic culture. The **Roman Catholic Church** embraced this false doctrine along with the idea of Sunday worship and an eternally burning hell. When Protestants broke away from the Mother Church, they were never able to discard these three heretical doctrines, the immortality of the soul, Sunday sacredness and an eternally burning hell. For this reason, the Bible predicts that the daughters will come back to mother!

“Christian concepts of a body-soul dichotomy originated with the ancient Greeks and were introduced into Christian theology at an early date by St. Gregory of Nyssa and by St. Augustine.” Encyclopedia Britannica

"The belief that the soul continues in existence after the dissolution of the body is...speculation...nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture...The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended" (Jewish Encyclopedia, 1941, Vol. 6, "Immortality of the Soul," pp. 564, 566).

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia comments on ancient Israel's view of the soul:

"We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness and is nowhere found in the Old Testament" (1960, Vol. 2, "Death," p. 812).

Lutheran Scholar Dr. T. A. Kantonen ([The Christian Hope](#), 1594, p. 37) summarized Luther's position on death:

"Luther, with a greater emphasis on the resurrection, preferred to concentrate on the scriptural metaphor of sleep. 'For just as one who falls asleep and reaches the morning unexpectedly when he awakes, without knowing what has happened to him we shall suddenly rise on the last day without knowing how we have come into death and through death. We shall sleep, until He comes and knocks on the little grave and says, 'Doctor Martin, get up! Then I shall rise in a moment, and be with him forever.'"



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #17 – THE FIRST POST MODERN

Introduction

According to the Bible, Satan succeeded in deceiving a third of the angels in heaven. His methods must have been extremely specious. If we understand Satan’s **deceptive methods at the beginning**, we will be able to understand and protect ourselves from his deceptive methods **at the end**:

*“If the angels were deceived by Lucifer’s ingenious methods of misrepresenting God, if Adam and Eve were deceived by his declaration that God was withholding from them the **higher education** that would make them as gods, is there not danger that men **today** will be deceived? Please read the **first chapter of Patriarchs and Prophets** and see if the precious truths contained in this book are not given by the Lord to protect His people from deceptions that are urged upon them **just now**.” Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, volume 10, p. 162*

So let us go back and consider Satan’s methods at the beginning of human history so that we can understand the very same methods he will use at the end:

God's Love

God surrounded Adam and Eve with every physical and spiritual blessing conceivable as a demonstration of His love. He gave them fresh air, radiant sunshine, luxuriant plants, delicious sweet water, fragrant flowers, luscious fruit, animal companions, human companionship, fellowship with angels and communion with Jesus face to face.

Adam and Eve did not earn any of this. God gave them all as a free gift, thus providing unmistakable evidence of His love. God hoped that His love would awaken a love response from them.

Love is a Choice

However, love is a choice. God cannot order people to love Him. God did not create man as a robot. He created him with the capacity of reciprocating His love. The giver of love desired a response of love. Adam and Eve had to choose to love God in return and the choice involved obedience.

The covenant idea existed even in the Garden of Eden! The covenant formula in the Bible is expressed repeatedly in the words, *"I shall be their God and they shall be my people!"* God took the initiative and he hoped that man would respond. Just like He later took the initiative to deliver Israel from bondage in the hopes that the people would respond in loving obedience.

The Test of Love is Obedience

During His ministry, Jesus said to His disciples, 'if you love me you will keep my commandments.' (John 14:15) Children demonstrate their love for their parents by willing and loving obedience and Adam and Eve were to show their love for God by rendering Him obedience. God placed a tree in the midst of the Garden to test Adam and Eve's love:

Genesis 2:15-17:

*"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the **Lord God commanded** the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

God's word was:

- **Clear**
- **Simple**
- **Easy to obey**

Obedience without Explanations

To give **evidence** of their love for God, Adam and Eve were to take God **at His word and obey** without **question or explanation**. Ellen White wrote:

*"Should they attempt to **investigate** its [the tree's] nature, they would be exposed to his [Satan's] wiles. They were admonished to give **careful heed** to the warning which God had sent them and **to be content** with the **instruction** that He had seen fit to impart." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53*

God explained what the **consequences** would be if they ate from the forbidden tree ('you will surely die') but He did not give them **any explanation** as to why they could not eat from that particular tree. He simply expected them to give Him **unquestioning obedience** as evidence of their gratefulness and love.

Furthermore, **God defined** the distinction between what was good and what was evil. The **standard** of right and wrong, of good and evil was **outside** of Adam and Eve, **not inside**. It was **external, not internal**. It was **objective**, not **subjective**. God was the **arbiter** of good and evil, not man.

A Divine Warning

God **had warned** Adam and Eve that a **powerful angel** had fallen from heaven and that he would attempt to deceive them. He told them that the enemy could have access to them **only at the forbidden tree** so they should keep away from it. Eve thought that if an angel came to entice her to eat from the tree, she would immediately know that it was the fallen angel. Little did she expect that Satan would disguise himself by using the serpent as his medium.

Five Methods

Satan used **five methods** to lead **Eve and then Adam** into disobeying God's explicit and clear Word.

Method #1: A Counterfeit Miracle

Eve **wandered away** from Adam and found herself under the tree admiring its lovely fruit. Satan then performed a **counterfeit miracle** by making it **appear** that the serpent could speak.

Genesis 3:1:

*"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And **he said** to the woman. . ."*

Satan somehow possessed the serpent and used it as a **medium**. It is no coincidence that when the book of Revelation describes Satan's **counterfeit miracles** at the end, he is called the **ancient** serpent echoing back to Genesis! Ellen White wrote:

*"Satan **entered** into the serpent, and took his position in the tree of knowledge, and commenced leisurely **eating** of the fruit." Ellen G. White, **The Spirit of Prophecy**, volume, p. 35*

When the serpent spoke to her, Eve was **surprised** because she knew that God had not given the serpent such an ability. Once again Ellen White explained:

*“But she was **amazed**, for **she knew** that to the serpent God had not given the power of speech.” Ellen G. White, **The Spirit of Prophecy**, volume 1, p. 35*

Ellen White described what occurred when Eve arrived at the tree:

*“The fruit was very beautiful and **she questioned with herself [talking to herself out loud without realizing it] why** God withheld it from them [**God had withheld it but had not explained why**]. Now was the tempter's opportunity. **As if** he were able to discern the **workings of her mind**, he addressed her: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Eve was **surprised** and startled as she thus seemed to **hear the echo of her thoughts**. However, the serpent continued, in a **musical voice**, with subtle **praise [flattery will get you everywhere]** of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were **not displeasing**. Instead of fleeing from the spot, she **lingered** wonderingly to hear **a serpent speak**. Had she been addressed by a being **like the angels**, her fears would have been excited; but she had **no thought** that the **fascinating serpent** could become the **medium** of the fallen foe.” Ellen G. White, **Patriarchs and Prophets**, p. 53*

Satan did not really read Eve's thoughts. Ellen White explains that when Eve questioned with herself as to why God withheld the tree from them, she audibly expressed the question:

*“Eve was **not aware** that she had **revealed** her thoughts by conversing to herself **aloud**; therefore, she was greatly astonished to hear her queries repeated by a serpent. She really thought the serpent had a **knowledge of her thoughts**, and that he must be very wise.” Ellen G. White, **The Review and Herald**, February 24, 1874*

The process was as follows:

- The serpent was eating and **not dying**.
- The serpent was **able to talk**; how **did he learn**?
- The serpent's voice was **musical**.
- The serpent flattered her for her **beauty**.
- The serpent was **beautiful**.
- She thought the serpent was able to **read her thoughts**.

Method #2: The Serpent Adulterated God's word

Now that Satan had captivated Eve by a counterfeit miracle, he led her to question God's Word:

Genesis 3:1:

*"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made and he said to the woman, "**Has God indeed [really told you] said:** 'You shall not eat of **every** tree of the garden'?"*

Ellen White referred to the serpent's words as the '**ensnaring question**' (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54). **What is a snare?** Trappers disguise snares in order to entrap their victims.

Satan misquoted God's Word. God had not forbidden them from eating of all the trees of the Garden. Satan misquoted God for a very **specific reason**. He knew that there is no better way to get someone to **enter a dialogue** than by making an **inaccurate statement** because the human tendency is to **correct the inaccurate statement** and Eve did just that. For example, if I tell someone that I am wearing a black coat and it is white, that someone will instantly correct me.

Genesis 3:2-3:

*"And the woman said to the serpent, "**We may eat** the fruit of the trees of the garden [**you have made an inaccurate statement**]; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you **touch it**, lest you die.'"*

Eve **exaggerated** what God had told them. The text does not say that God forbade them to touch the tree. Eve **added words** to the word of God:

*"Eve had **overstated** the words of God's command. He had said to Adam and Eve, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In Eve's controversy with the serpent, **she added**, "Neither shall ye touch it." Ellen G. White, Confrontation, p. 14*

When Eve **added to the word** of God, the serpent plucked the fruit and put it in her hand with the intention of insinuating that she had **touched the fruit** and was **still alive**!

The serpent then told her he had acquired the **ability to speak** (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54) suggesting that if a serpent could learn to speak by eating the fruit, imagine the **possibilities that were open to her**!

Method #3: Eve responded to her impressions, feelings and human reason

The serpent now had Eve exactly where he wanted her. He told her the **most dangerous lie** ever told:

Genesis 3:4: *"You will **not** surely die . . ."*

By this statement, Satan planted **cognitive dissonance** in the mind of Eve. She was confused because there was a conflict between what God said and the serpent said:

- **God said:** *'If you eat from the tree you will **surely** die.'*
- The **serpent said:** *'If you eat you eat from the tree you will **not surely** die.'*
- The insinuation was that God was lying to them. Satan **plants thoughts** in our minds because he knows how we will respond to them. When Satan said to Eve, 'you will not surely die', Satan knew exactly what **Eve's next thought** would be:
- If eating from the tree **will not cause** death, then **why** did God say that it would?
- Why did God **lie to us**?
- What **ulterior motive** could God have for lying to us?"
- Satan **planted the question** in Eve's mind ('why did God lie to us?') and then he proceeded to provide the **answer to the question he planted:**

Genesis 3:5:

*"For **God knows** that in **the day** you eat of it your **eyes will be opened** and you will be **like God**, knowing **good and evil**."*

Remember that God had **not explained** why they could not eat from that particular tree but Satan now gave Eve the 'reason'. Satan was suggesting:

*"**God knows something** that He does not want **you to know**. He wants you **to be blind** to the **true reason why** He told you **not to eat from the tree**. God **keeps secrets** and there is **an agenda** behind His secrecy."*

At this point Eve's curiosity was screaming to know the reason why God told them not to eat from that particular tree and Satan knew it. Satan knows that Eve's **curiosity had peaked** so he tells Eve the reason.

Here is Satan's line of reasoning:

*"God at some point in the past **ate from this tree** and in this way He **acquired the powers** that made Him God. However, He **did not want anyone** else to have those same powers so from that point on, **He intimidated** people with the idea that they would die if they ate from the tree."*

Ellen White provides the following perceptive comment:

*"And he insinuated that the Lord **jealously desired to withhold it** from them, lest they should be **exalted to equality** with Himself. It was because of its wonderful properties, imparting wisdom and power, that He had prohibited them from **tasting [God's instruction] or even touching it [Satan repeating Eve's words]**. The tempter intimated that the divine warning was not to be actually fulfilled; it was designed merely to **intimidate them**." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54*

Satan told Eve that they would be like God **one particular way**. Up to that point God defined what was good and evil. However, he insinuated that if they would be able to **distinguish** between good and evil **from within** without depending on God's definition. This is just what **Lucifer** had argued in heaven:

*"He reiterated his claim that angels needed **no control**, but should be left to follow their **own will**, which would ever **guide them right**. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, **freed from this restraint**, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a **more exalted**, more glorious state of existence." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 499*

*"He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their **own wisdom was a sufficient guide**." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37*

Eve bought the lie **bait, hook, line, sinker, fishing pole, fisherman and boat!**

Method #4: What her senses said

After Satan captivated Eve's mind, she decided to obey the testimony of her senses. She **heard** the serpent's 'logical argument', the fruit **looked** pretty, it **smelled** good, it appealed to her **taste**, and she **touched** it and did not die.

Genesis 3:6:

*"So when the woman **saw** that the tree was **good** for food, that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she **took** of its fruit and **ate**."*

It was dangerous indeed for Eve to follow the testimony of her senses instead of the explicit Word of God. The conflict at the very beginning is between the Word of God and the Word of Satan. At the end the conflict will be over Sabbath in the Word of God or Sunday as the traditions of men.

Method # 5: Eve now became Adam's Temptress

Once Satan has gained the **victory over people**, he uses those same people to tempt other people and lead them into sin.

Genesis 3:6:

*"She also **gave to her husband** with her, and he ate."*

Adam's great sin is that he **loved Eve more** than he loved God! Eve was deceived but Adam ate because he could not bear the thought of losing Eve. He loved the gift more than the giver. Ellen White provided an incisive explanation:

*"Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were **overborne by love to Eve**. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation. He did not realize that the same Infinite Power who had from the dust of the earth created him, a living, beautiful form, and had in love given him a companion, could*

supply her place. He resolved to share her fate; if she must die, **he would die with her**. After all, he **reasoned [rationalized]**, might not the words of the wise serpent be true? Eve was before him, as **beautiful** and apparently as innocent as before this act of disobedience. She expressed **greater love** for him than before. **No sign of death** appeared in her, and he decided to **brave the consequences**. He seized the fruit and quickly ate." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 56, 57

At the end of time, Satan will use learned men to **deceive the masses**:

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to **bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology**, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595

"The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in **doubt and darkness** by **learned men**, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a **mystical, a secret, spiritual** meaning **not apparent in the language employed**. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Mark 12:24. The language of the Bible should be explained according to its **obvious meaning**, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. If men would but **take the Bible as it reads**, if there were no false teachers to **mislead and confuse** their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 598, 599

Must Study for Ourselves

Only those who have been **diligent students** of the Scriptures and who have **received the love of the truth** will be **shielded** from the **powerful delusion** that

takes the world captive. By the **Bible testimony** these will detect the deceiver in his **disguise**. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now **so firmly established upon His word** that they would not yield to the evidence of **their senses**? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the **Bible and the Bible only**? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to **hedge up their way, entangle them** with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden that their hearts may be **overcharged with the cares of this life** and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 624-626

"Eve **really believed** the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She **disbelieved the words of God**, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they **did not believe the truth**, because they **neglected the opportunity** of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to **know what is truth**. All the lessons that God has caused to be **placed on record in His word** are for our warning and instruction. They are given to **save us from deception**. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. **Whatever contradicts God's word**, we may be sure proceeds from Satan." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 55

Experience in **Medellin**. Know the truth in order to **detect a counterfeit**.

Ellen White wrote a very important chapter in the book *The Great Controversy* titled 'The Scriptures a Safeguard'. It would do well for us to read this chapter and internalize it.

"The **last great delusion** is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. **So closely** will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be **impossible to distinguish** between them except by the Holy

*Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle **must be tested**.* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 593

"But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority--not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595



“MISINTERPRETED TEXTS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #18 – SPIRITS OF DEVILS

The Supremacy of the Scriptures

Isaiah 40:8:

*“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the **word** of our God **stands forever.**”*

Matthew 4:4:

*“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”*

2 Timothy 3:14-16: Valuable for several things:

*“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you **wise for salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” ¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction** in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.”*

Visit to Germany

A few years ago, I held a series of evangelistic meetings in Karlsruhe, Germany. During that series of meetings, I remember visiting a gentleman and his wife in their home. He professed no religion and she was a faithful Jehovah's Witness. About three years later, I had a series in the same city and he once again came but this time he was alone.

After the Wednesday evening meeting he met me at the door, pointed at a flyer he had in his hand and said, "*When are you going to talk about what happens when people die?*" I courteously answered that I was not going to speak on that particular topic but I would be glad to visit him and study it in the privacy of his home. Two days later, we paid him a visit.

Visit at His Home

As I mentioned before, his wife had been a Jehovah's Witness for many years and he attended the Kingdom Hall faithfully with her although he never joined. A short while before we visited him, his wife had a falling out with the Kingdom Hall because a moral lapse of one of the elders of the church. It bears noting that Jehovah's witnesses share the Adventist view of the state of the dead.

Five months before my visit he lost his wife to a painful bout with cancer. He had been married for 22 years and was devastated. As we sat at his kitchen table, he cried his eyes out.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

He told us that after his devastating loss he had searched for literature that would help him deal with his profound grief. A friend recommended that he read the works of the Swiss psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

Kübler-Ross' extensive work with the dying led to the publication of her best-selling book On Death and Dying in 1969.

In this work, she proposed the now famous **Five Stages of Grief** as a **pattern of adjustment**. These five stages of grief are **denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance**. In general, most terminal patients experience most of these stages, though in no defined sequence, after they come face to face with the reality of their **impending death**.

I remember Dr. Kübler-Ross because I **heard her speak** in a **nursing symposium** at **Andrews University** in **1972**.

In the **late 1970's** Kübler-Ross developed an interest in **out-of-body experiences, spiritualism** and **necromancy**. She also came to believe that **Christianity** taught the **doctrine of reincarnation**.

As we sat at the table, the **72-year old gentleman** described how he came to believe that dead people go through a **dark tunnel at death** and come out on the other side into a **glorious realm of light** with an **incomparable feeling of peace and love**. He also told us that a **friend** of his told him that he had **seen his dead wife**. He told him that his wife had the **same appearance**, the **same voice** and remembered their history together while she was alive.

Our Response

Of course, we had our work **cut out for us**. I asked him, 'more than anything, **you would want to see your wife and know that she is happy**, right?' He answered, 'yes'.

I then opened my Bible to Genesis 3 and showed him how God told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate from the tree and **Satan told Eve that she would not die**. I then told him the story of the Witch of Endor and read how Satan can disguise himself and even transform himself into an angel of light.

A Hypothetical Case

Then I shared a hypothetical case. Let us suppose that your wife suddenly appeared to you in that doorway, she talked with you in the same voice, with the same appearance, remembered your times together and told you that she was in a better place. Would you believe that it is your wife because you desperately miss her and would like to be with her? He answered, in the light of what you showed me in the Bible I am not sure.

I then continued. "This would be a most trying experience. Your eyes, your heart, your mind, your feelings all tell you that this is your wife. Would you trust the Bible or would you follow what your heart, your eyes, your ears and your feelings tell you? The Bible says that the '*living know that they will die but the dead know nothing.*' What would your choice be?"

His eyes opened wide and for what appeared to be an eternity he was speechless. We then prayed with him a left. He did not come to church on Friday evening or Sabbath morning or evening. I have no idea what his final decision was.

The Acid Test

There are times in everyday life when we cannot trust our senses, our feelings or what others tell us. For example, the traditional acid test for gold consists in placing a small drop of a strong acid, such as nitric acid, onto the metal's surface. Most metals fizz or bubble, while precious metals are unaffected. The acid test is thus decisive, immediate, cheap and simple.

When it comes to testing precious metals such as gold, you cannot rely on people telling you its gold or on the fact that it looks like gold or when you bite it, it feels like gold. You must apply an external test that will give you absolute certainty that it is gold. Or else you might just fall for fool's gold!

Satan's Final Plan

The Bible tells us that Satan's deceptions at the end of time will be so deceitful that practically the whole world will buy into his lies:

Matthew 24:23-25:

*"Then if anyone says to you, '**Look**, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show **great signs and wonders** to deceive, if possible, **even the elect** [notice Satan's target audience] ²⁵ See, **I have told you** beforehand."*

Revelation 16:13, 14:

*"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, **performing signs**, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the **whole world**, to **gather them** to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."*

Satan will even impart **counterfeit spiritual gifts** to Christians in order to deceive them.

Matthew 7:21-23:

*"Not everyone who says to Me: '**Lord, Lord**,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will** of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, '**Lord, Lord**, have we not **prophesied** in **Your name**, **cast out demons** in **Your name**, and done **many wonders** in **Your name**?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I **never** knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness**!'"*

How can we keep from being deceived? We need a great Detector of Error

As we saw in our previous study, in order to understand Satan's deceptive strategy for the end, we must understand the methods he used to deceive Adam and Eve at the beginning.

The only safeguard that Adam and Eve had was to obey God's word to the very letter no matter what their eyes, ears, reason and feelings told them.

Satan used a counterfeit **miracle, misquoted God's word** and led Eve to follow the testimony of her own **reason** and **senses**. Then Satan used Eve to lead Adam to obey her word rather than God's. What was their only protection against the wiles of Satan? Pure and Simple: **Obedience to God's objective word!**

Genesis 3:1-6:

*"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said **[counterfeit miracle because serpents cannot speak]** to the woman, 'Has God indeed said **[misquotes God's words because he wants Eve to begin a conversation]**, 'You shall not eat of **every** tree of the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent **[Eve corrects the serpent]**, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch **[Eve adds to the word of God]** it, lest you die.'" ⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. **[use of Eve's reason apart from the word]**" ⁶ So when the woman saw **[following the testimony of her senses]** that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave **[uses people to tempt people, the testimony of others]** to her husband with her, and he ate."*

At the end, Satan will use **all kinds of wiles** to lead the world astray. He will appeal to **reason**, the testimony of the **senses**, and **feelings**. He will **misquote Scripture** and use **other people to try** to lead God's people astray.

The issue at the beginning was actually quite simple: Believe and obey God's truth or believe and obey the Satan's lie. The **same issue** will take place at the **end of time**. The final test will be Sabbath or Sunday—Sabbath in obedience to God's word or Sunday in obedience to Satan's word. The issue will not be merely a matter of days but a matter of authority.

According to Isaiah 8, the Bible is the **great tester** of doctrine and personal experience. We frequently use Isaiah 8:20 as one of the tests of a true prophet. However, verse 19 tells us that the contrast is between the Word of God and the testimony of medium and wizards:

Isaiah 8:19, 20:

*"And when they say to you: "Seek those who are **mediums and wizards**, who whisper and mutter," Should not a people **seek their God**? Should they **seek the dead** on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is **no light in them**."*

The Great Detector

The Bible is the **great detector of error**—light that rebukes the darkness. The **only way to defeat darkness** is to **turn on the light**. Yet **today** people put **all kinds of authorities** ahead and in place of the Bible, things such as **science**, **philosophy**, **feelings**, **emotions**, **signs and wonders**, **preachers**, and the testimony of the **senses**.

Ellen White wrote the following sobering statement:

*"But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the **Bible only**, as the standard of all doctrines and the **basis** of all reforms. The **opinions***

of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority--not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 595

On every occasion, Jesus answered His enemies with 'it is written'. Ellen White warned:

"The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 593

Know the State of the Dead

In this series on the Misinterpreted texts on the state of the dead, we have seen how Satan even leads religious leaders to twist and contort the Scriptures to force them to harmonize with their pre-conceived ideas. The only way to detect a counterfeit is to compare it with the genuine. The only way to detect error is to know the truth.

Ellen White warned that Seventh-day Adventists must be able to answer any and every objection to the biblical view of the state of the dead:

"I saw that the saints must get a thorough understanding of present truth, which they will be obliged to maintain from the Scriptures. They must understand the state of the dead; for the spirits of devils will yet appear to them, professing to be beloved friends and relatives, who will declare to them that the Sabbath has been changed, also other unscriptural doctrines. They will do all in their power to excite sympathy and will work miracles before them to confirm

what they declare. The people of God must be prepared to withstand these spirits with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything, and that they who appear to them are the spirits of devils. Our minds must not be taken up with things around us, but must be occupied with the **present truth** and a preparation to give a reason of our hope with meekness and fear. We must seek wisdom from on high that we may **stand in this day of error and delusion.**” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 87, 88

Satan has power to perfectly counterfeit the appearance of their departed friend and relatives:

“He has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The **counterfeit is perfect**; the familiar **look**, the **words**, the **tone**, are reproduced with **marvelous distinctness**. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear ‘to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.’” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 552

“It is Satan's most **successful and fascinating delusion**—one calculated to take hold of the **sympathies** of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave. Evil angels come in the **form of those loved ones** and relate incidents connected with their lives, and perform acts that they performed while living. In this way, they lead persons to believe that their dead friends **are angels**, hovering over them and **communicating with them**. These evil angels, who assume to be the deceased friends, are regarded with a **certain idolatry**, and with many their word has **greater weight** than the Word of God.” Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, August 26, 1889.

Speaking of the **religious world** at the end of time, Ellen White wrote:

“They declared that they had the truth, that **miracles** were among them, that **angels from heaven talked with them and walked with them**, that **great power, and signs and wonders were performed** among them, and this was the

*Temporal Millennium, which they had been expecting so long. The whole world was converted and in harmony with the **Sunday law**, and this little feeble people stood out in defiance of the laws of the land and the laws of God, and claimed to be the **only ones right** on the earth.” Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 209.*

Satan’s Capstone of Deception: Impersonation of Christ

Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy tell us that Satan will counterfeit the second coming of Christ by appealing to **feelings** (I have come to deliver you), by **senses** (face shining as the sun and performing miracles) and **twisted Biblical arguments** (Sunday texts). If we do not know **how** Jesus will come or **what** we believe, how will we detect the counterfeit?

The Bible makes two things clear about the manner of Christ’s second coming:

- That Jesus will **not touch** the earth when He comes
- That the **Sabbath** is His day of rest.

Here is Ellen White’s portrayal of the second coming that she bases on Matthew 24:23-27:

*“As the **crowning act** in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will **make it appear** that Christ has come. In **different parts** of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of **dazzling brightness**, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that **mortal eyes** have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: "Christ has come! Christ has come!" The people **prostrate themselves** in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and **pronounces a blessing** upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His **voice is soft and subdued**, yet full of **melody**. In **gentle, compassionate** tones he presents **some** of the same gracious,*

heavenly truths which the Savior uttered; he **heals the diseases** of the people, and then, in his **assumed character** of Christ, **he claims to have changed** the Sabbath to Sunday, and **commands all to hallow** the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are **blaspheming his name** by refusing to **listen to his angels** sent to them with light and truth. This is the **strong, almost overmastering delusion**. But the people of God will not be misled. **The teachings** of this false christ are not in **accordance with the Scriptures**. His **blessing** is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image, the very class upon whom the Bible declares that **God's unmingled wrath** shall be poured out.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 625

The apostle Paul in 2Thessalonians further describes Satan’s counterfeit Parousía:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-13:

“The **coming** of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all **power, signs, and lying wonders**,¹⁰ and with all unrighteous **deception** among those who perish, **because** they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹¹ And for this reason God will send them **strong delusion**, that they should believe **the** lie,¹² that they all may be condemned who did not **believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

“Because the children of men reject the plainest teachings of his word, and trample upon his law, God leaves them to **choose that which they desire**. They spurn the truth, and he **permits them** to believe a lie. They refuse to yield to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and Satan, **transforming himself** into an angel of light, leads them captive at his will. If men were but **conversant with the word of God**, and **obedient to its teachings**, they could not be thus deceived; but they **neglect the great detector of fraud**, and the mind becomes **confused and corrupted** by the deceptive arts of men, and the secret power of the father of lies.” Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1882

More Ellen White Quotes

*“Everything in the religious world is to be **tried** by the Scriptures. ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them’ (Isaiah 8:20). The **claimed enlightenment of the Spirit within** is to be tested and tried **by the Word of God**, which is the detector of the pure wheat...” Ellen G. White, That I May Know Him, p. 195*

*“Parents, if you would educate your children to serve God and do good in the world, make the Bible your textbook. It **exposes the wiles of Satan**. It is the great elevator of the race, the reprover and corrector of moral evils, **the detector that enables us to distinguish between the true and the false**. Whatever else is taught in the home or at school, **the Bible**, as the great educator, should stand first.” Ellen G. White, Child Guidance, p. 510*

*“The **Word of God is the great detector of error**; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our **standard for every doctrine**. We must study it **reverentially**. We are to receive **no one’s opinion** without comparing it with the Scriptures. Here is divine authority, which is **supreme** in matters of faith.” Ellen G. White, Christ Triumphant, p. 331*

*“It is the Word of the living God that is to **decide all controversies**.” Ellen G. White, Christ Triumphant, p. 331*

Parapsychologists have done tests that prove that someone is communicating from the other side. The problem is that there is no way for parapsychologists to identify who is communicating. Because they are invisible entities, they cannot prove that they are spirits of the dead. This is a channel through which Satan has full and complete control. He can tell people whatever he wants them to believe and if they believe in the immortality of the soul there is no way they can escape from his power. He can tell people that Sunday is the day of rest and that the natural calamities are due to those who keep the Sabbath and people

will believe him. Our only protection is to simply believe what the word of God says, 'the living know that they will die but the dead know nothing.'"

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