



BEHOLD, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall 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 shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have 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 thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:51-57)

I will avoid referring to death as existing in a cemetery pit six feet under the surface, for that is not the abode of Death. The Scriptures do make passing reference to that grave in illustration: "Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:5-7). Notice the dimensions of the grave do not apply here. Yes, a grave may be six foot long which constitutes the 'long home' referenced, but that is merely an illustration of a longer home in eternity. How came death to be, and what is the nature of that shadowy state we call Death?

First of all, what is Death? Physically speaking, it is the physical separation of the body and soul. In reality, the soul is immortal and never dies. This is true of both believers and those who remain condemned in their sins. The ultimate destination of the two cases is the great variance of which we must be mindful. Spiritually speaking, death is the natural state of the unbeliever who is already dead in trespasses and sin:

¹ *And you hath he quickened, **who were dead in trespasses and sins;*** ² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:* ³ *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* ⁴ *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,* ⁵ **Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened (made alive) us together with Christ,** *(by grace ye are saved;)* ⁶ *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:* ⁷ *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* ⁸ **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:** ⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* ¹⁰ **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,** *which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:1-10) Do not forget the good works that give evidence of our salvation.

None can take initial credit for that work of GRACE that drew them to Christ through the faith ministered by the Holy Spirit to the sinners heart. We can lay no claim to any virtue or merit that led to our salvation – it is solely a work of grace. But note that we were all dead in trespasses and sin prior to that work of grace. This is the spiritual death to which God made reference in His warning to our ancient forefather, Adam: ¹⁶ *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:* ¹⁷ *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.* (Genesis 2:16-17)

Physical death is a mirage or, as the 23rd Psalm describes, a shadow only. It has no capacity to hurt or to destroy the soul of man. It is the transitory gate. The great death spoken of in Scripture is not physical, but spiritual. The elect constitute the Body of Christ. In the same way that physical death results in separation of body and soul, spiritual death results in separation of the soul from Christ as a member of His Body. It does not, however, signify the end of the soul so separated.

Both physical and spiritual death came as a result of sin. You will observe that Adam did not physically die immediately upon partaking of the forbidden tree. He did die spiritually, and his body was reduced to a limit of time prior to physical death taking its toll. Whether Adam was later called and elected remains a mystery.

The Lord does not make a distinction of difference in the disposition of the spirit of man at the moment of death: *“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”* Even the dead body of shall be restored at that day when the dead in Christ shall rise. If we die in Christ to self, we rise in Christ to His glory. Job experienced a very early understanding of that great truth: ²³ *Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!* ²⁴ *That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!* ²⁵ **For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:** ²⁶ **And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:** ²⁷ *Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.* (Job 19:23-27) What exceptional joy we may take in declaring to Job in Paradise, ‘Man, I read your BOOK!’ This reality is reaffirmed prolifically throughout the New Testament. *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* (John 5:28-29)

Now to address, briefly, the continuance of the soul for both the righteous and the unrighteous. Remember the parable (?) of the Rich Man and Lazarus? *“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”* **Luke 16:19-23 (KJV)** This may be a parable, or it may suggest an actual event, but it would be nonsense to dismiss the reality of any parable our Lord taught sense each reflects spiritual truths. Note the disposition of souls in the two lives of the rich Man and Lazarus.

We read Lazarus, the beggar died. What happened at the instant of his death? He was *“carried by the angels to the into Abraham’s bosom.”* What happened when the Rich Man died? *“ . . . the rich man also died, and was buried.”* The two men took different routes after death – one went up, the other went down, but both maintained sensibilities. The Rich Man was transported, immediately, to Hell where he could look up and see Lazarus at comfort in the bosom of Abraham; but the Rich Man was suffering in the pains of Hell. Though the Rich Man could see Lazarus, there is not mention that Lazarus could see the Rich Man. Paradise is bliss, and no one there will witness such terror as takes place in Hell. The Rich Man’s soul did not die with his body, but lived on to suffer long-deserved punishment and retribution. Our personality will persist after physical death. The Rich Man still possessed sensitivity to pain and memory, and was concerned for his brothers who remained alive. But there is no salvation in Hell.

The Rich Man pleaded for Abraham to send Lazarus to testify to his brethren that they might believe and be saved from Hell; but Abraham stated a great truth in response: *“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”* (Luke 16:31) What did Abraham mean by this? Had not One arisen from the dead, and many persisted in unbelief despite the fact. Christ rose from the tomb on the third day, did He not! Even one named Lazarus had also arisen from the tomb in the face of many witnesses, yet most of the observers did not believe unto salvation.

When Jesus was nailed to the rough-hewn cross and fixed between two criminals, we read: *“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:39-43) Jesus told the man that HE would be with the Lord in paradise – not some generic spirit, but the same man who was dying with Christ would be with Christ in Paradise that very day.

The soul never perishes, but lives on in only one, or the other, of two states – Paradise or Hell. *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter 1:10-11)

NOTE: The Doctrine concerning DEATH cannot be adequately covered in a short devotion. There is so much more than I have covered here. My purpose is the hope that interest in the reader will be spurred to study more deeply all the Scriptures concerning the eternal life made available in Christ Jesus.