

FACTS FROM THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING DEATH

by Joseph E Kirk and George L Rogers

I. WHAT IS DEATH?

- 1. Death is a return (Gen 3:17-19).

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Psa. 146:2-4 Eccl 3:19,20

Job 34:14,15 Eccl 12:1-7

Death is a return of the person, of the body, and of the spirit.

- 2. Death is the opposite of life, or the absence of life, not life in some other form or place.

2 Ki 20:1 "thou that die and not live"

Rev 20:4-6 "the dead live not until"

Num 4:19 "that they may live, and not die"

- 3. Death is a sleep.

Psa 13:3 "lest I sleep the sleep of death"

1 Th 4:13-18 "them that are asleep"

Dan 12:2 "them that sleep in the dust"

Both the righteous and the unrighteous are said to be asleep when they are dead.

- 4. Death is an enemy.

1 Co 15:26 "the last enemy abolished is death"

II. WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

- 1. They are all in one place (Eccl 3:19,20).

Psa 22:15 Job 7:21

Gen 3:19 compare Gen 2:7

- 2. Their place is one of silence and repose.

Job 3:11-22 Psa 115:17

Psa 88:10-12 Eccl 9:10

- 3. They are not with Christ in heaven.

John 3:13 Acts 2:34

The statement that David ascended not into the heavens is made after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The only way believers get to be with the Lord is by His coming for them. See 1 Thes 4:16-17, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." Also John 14:3, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Death is never said to take one to be with the Lord.

- 4. The dead are in their graves.

John 5:28-29 "all who are in their graves"

Dan 12:2 "them that sleep in the dust"

Isa 26:19 "ye that dwell in the dust"

In the Word of God the dead are always said to be where their bodies are.

III. WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE DEAD?

- 1. They sleep and rest.

1 The 4:13-18 1 Cor 15:51-57

Acts 7:60 compare Acts 8:2

John 11:11 compare John 11:14

1 Cor 15:3-20 Dan 12:2

The Scriptures never speak of the sleep of the soul, nor of the sleep of the body. They always speak of the sleep of the *person* with reference to death. The sleep of death obliterates the interval between this life and the next, in so far as consciousness is concerned.

- 2. They praise not the Lord nor exercise mental powers.

Psa 6:5 Psa 115:17 Psa 8:10-12

Eccl 9:4-6 Psa 146:4 Isa 38:18,19

- 3. They do not live until the resurrection.

Rev 20:4-6 1 Cor 15:12-21

IV. WHAT COMFORTING ASSURANCE DOES GOD GIVE CONCERNING THE DEAD?

- 1. That they will all be resurrected.

John 5:28-29 Rev 20:11-15

- 2. That they will all ultimately receive fulness of life through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 15:22-28 1 Tim 2:3-6

Rom 5:18,19 1 Tim 4:9-11

WHAT ABOUT THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL?

The Scriptures never speak of the "immortality of the soul." On the contrary there are many places where the soul is said to die. See Isa 53:12; Ezek 18:4,20; Psa 78:50; Psa 116:1-8; Mat 26:38; etc.

The word "immortality" occurs altogether only three times in the original Scriptures:

1 Tim 6:13-16 "Christ only hath immortality"

1 Cor 15:53 "this mortal must put on immortality"

1 Cor 15:54 "this mortal shall have put on immortality"

Believers receive immortality *when*, not before, Jesus Christ returns. Faith in Christ as Saviour does not swallow up death in victory. Even believers are said to be dead (1 Thes 4:16, "the dead in Christ"; 1 Cor 15:51,52; John 11:25). For believers, death is swallowed up in victory when Jesus Christ returns and raises the dead and transforms the living. See 1 Cor 15:54-57.

The teaching that man is inherently immortal robs Jesus Christ of glory that belongs to Him for it is only through Him and His saving work that man receives immortality.

"Death of the body" and "resurrection of the body" are expressions not to be found in the Scriptures. Death is of the *person*. Resurrection is of the *person*. In the Scriptures the *person* is said to die. See Deut 10:6; Josh 1:2; Josh 24:33; 1 Sam 4:17-19; Rom 5:6; etc.)

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE SPIRIT

The Scriptures distinguish clearly between the spirit and the soul. The spirit and the breath are closely related as may be seen in the expression "the breath of the spirit of life" (Gen 7:22, R.S.V. or marginal reading; 2 Sam 22:16; Psa 18:15; Isa 42:5). The spirit is that invisible life force from God which when united with the body *produces* the consciousness, the sensation, the ego. The soul is the consciousness, the sensation, the ego (Isa 29:8; Gen 42:21; Deut 12:15-23; Job 10:1; Job 21:25; Psa 43:5; Psa 107:18; etc.).

The soul of the flesh is said to be in the blood (Lev 17:11; Gen 9:4; etc.). The word translated life in these passages is the Hebrew word for soul, **nephesh**[1].

An electric light serves as a good illustration of the difference between the body, the soul, and the spirit. Let the bulb and its filament, which is made from the elements out of the earth, represent the body. Let the electricity, an invisible force, represent the spirit. Let the light and heat produced by the union of the electricity with the bulb, represent the soul. When the connection is broken the light goes out. Out where? To the unseen or unperceived.

When God created man, He formed him out of the dust of the ground. He then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and as a result man *became* a living soul (Gen 2:7).

Death is a reversal of what happened in the creation. At death, the spirit (not the consciousness, but the force from God which when united with the body produces it) returns to God from whence it came. The soul (the sensation, the consciousness, the ego) dies. The body returns to the dust and the person is dead until *resurrection*.

The spirit, the soul, and the person go to different places at death. The spirit returns to God (Eccl 12:7). The soul goes to Hades (Acts 2:27). The person is said to be in the grave (John 5:28). When our Lord Jesus Christ died His spirit went to God (Luke 23:46); His soul went to **Hades**[2] (Acts 2:22-32); He, Himself, is said to have been in the tomb during the days He was dead (1 Cor 15:3,4; Mat 12:40).

Failure to grasp the truth concerning death strikes at the very heart of the gospel. Whatever the wages of sin is, Jesus Christ endured it to the full, in order to become man's Saviour. If the wages of sin is eternal punishment, Jesus Christ could not be the Saviour of anyone, for He did not endure that. If the wages of sin is annihilation, He could not be the Saviour of anyone, for He did not endure that. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). "Christ *died* for our sins, was buried and was raised the third day" (1 Cor 15:1-5).

Failure to recognize the facts concerning death makes resurrection unimportant. If the dead are alive enjoying the bliss of a better life without a body, what real need is there for a resurrection? When the facts that the dead are really dead is understood, resurrection becomes all-important. "If there is no resurrection, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor 15:32). The only scriptural hope for the dead is resurrection, apart from which there is no further life for them. "The dead live not until (resurrection)". See Rev 20:4-12 and compare John 5:28,29. Two resurrections separated by a thousand years are referred to in these passages.

Wrong views concerning death result in wrong views concerning the future punishment of the wicked. The combined result of this is a teaching that slanders God and dishonors the Lord Jesus Christ.

There will be wrath and punishment for the wicked but it will fit the crimes and will accomplish a good purpose (John 5:22,23). God is going to be *All in all* in due time (1 Cor 15:28). This is brought about by and through the saving work of Jesus Christ, Who is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). There is no life during death, but through Him all will ultimately receive fulness of life, or immortality. In this manner death, all death, the first and the second, will be abolished from God's universe (1 Cor 15:22-28). When all

have been Justified (Rom 5:18,19), Reconciled to God (Col 1:20), and Subjected to the Son (1 Cor 15:27,28; Phil 2:9-11; Eph 1:9,10), then the Son will deliver up a perfected universe to the Father and God will be *All in all*. Nothing short of being the Saviour of all men will satisfy Him (1 Tim 4:9-11; 1 Tim 2:3-6)

[1] The Hebrew word for soul, *nephesh*, is translated in more than 30 different ways in the Authorized Version. Some examples are as follows: any, appetite, beast, creature, dead body, desire, fish, ghost, heart, life, lust, man, mind, mortally, pleasure, will, thing, self, etc. A booklet entitled "What is the Soul?", which contains all the references to these translations may be had from [Concordant Publishing Concern, 15570 Knochaven Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91350](#).

[2] *Hades* and *Sheol* are different words for the same place. *Hades* is the Greek word used in the New Testament and *Sheol* is the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament. Compare Psalm 16:10, R.S.V., with Acts 2:27, R.S.V. There is a close connection between the grave and *sheol* or *hades*. *Hades* means the unseen or the unperceived. The spirit is never associated with *hades* in the Scriptures. It is the soul that goes to *hades*.