

This tract briefly reviews what the Word of God says about death and what happens after we die. First, let's begin from conception. At conception, God formed us and knows who we are (Ps. 139:13-16). He gave us our spirit (Zech. 12:1) because He is the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9). Without a spirit, our bodies will die (Jam. 2:26).

Our birth marked the beginning of our short time here on earth. "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away (Job 14:1-2)." The Bible also compares our lives to a shadow (1Chr. 29:15), a sigh (Ps. 90:9), a vapor (Jam. 4:14), a weaver's shuttle and to the wind (Job. 7:6-7). Since our lives are so short, Paul warns us to "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16)." God has given us a free will to choose how we live our lives. We can either serve God by obeying His commands and living righteously, or we can serve the devil by being worldly and living un-righteously (Jos. 24:15; Rom. 6:16). How we decide to live our lives will determine our destination. We can see this from the story that Jesus tells:

Luke 16:19 "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 which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.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.²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.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.'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. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'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.'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.'

This story teaches us what happens when we die. First, we need to realize that we have no power over our death because eventually we will all die (Ecc. 8:8). When we die, our spirits leave our bodies (Jam. 2:26) and go back to God, while our physical bodies ultimately turn into dust (Ecc. 12:7). In our story, the righteous man is Lazarus and the unrighteous man is the rich man. When Lazarus died, his spirit was carried away by angels to Abraham's bosom, which is also called paradise (Lk. 23:43). While he struggled with poverty on the earth, he is now enjoying the riches and comforts that only the righteous will experience. The Bible teaches us that a righteous person should look forward to the day they die. For instance, Solomon said, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth (Ecc. 7:1)." Paul was looking forward to his death:

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.²³ For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

When the righteous person dies, they no longer have to battle the evils of this world, and they will begin their eternal peace (Isa. 57:1-2). John says, "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" (Rev. 14:13)." The deaths of the righteous are precious in the sight of the Lord (Ps. 116:15). When we get to paradise, we will be with all the righteous souls that have gone on before us like Abraham, Moses and Samuel. Even King David knew that he would see his son again in paradise (2 Sam. 12:19-23). Knowing all this should encourage us to live righteous lives and make us realize that we don't have to fear death. Instead, we can look forward to all the blessings that come with it.

Our story also teaches us that the unrighteous go to the place of torment when they die. The rich man had it good while he was on the earth and he did not live his life for God. Now he is suffering and wishes that he could have just one drop of water to cool his tongue. All those who live their lives for themselves and embrace the evil way will find themselves in this horrible place. The rich man chose this destination by the way he lived his life, and he realized his fate was sealed. However, he knew there was still time for his brothers to change their ways because they were still living. He didn't want them to suffer his fate, so he pleaded with Abraham to send someone back from the dead to warn them. However, Abraham would not do this because he knew if his brothers would not listen to Moses, then they would not listen to someone who had come back from the dead. Those who choose to live like the rich man should fear death because it is the beginning of eternal torment.

Our story teaches us that while our physical bodies die, our spirits are alive and we are aware of our surroundings. Lazarus experienced comfort and the rich man experienced torment. Even though there was an impassable gulf that separated these two destinations, the rich man was able to see and recognize Abraham and Lazarus. This teaches us that we will recognize one another when we die, even though we are no longer in our physical bodies. Those who teach that we soul sleep when we die are

mistaken. Our story makes this clear and so do the following verses:

Revelation 6:9 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.

These souls are speaking, showing curiosity, concern, and they were able to understand what was said to them. Since our story says that no one can cross the great gulf, it teaches against the false idea of purgatory taught by the Catholic Church. They teach that it is possible for a departed soul to leave the place of torment and enter paradise through the prayers of the priests. Also, it teaches against the Mormon doctrine of baptizing for the dead. They teach that a living person can be baptized for the deceased so they can be saved. Another great passage that confirms that our destination cannot be changed once we die is:

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

So when we die, we either go to paradise or to the place of torment depending on how we lived our life. This area where the spirits go is called Hades, which is the waiting place for the Day of Judgment. In a sense, those who have already passed away have been prejudged, but they will not receive their rewards or degrees of punishments until the Day of Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Mat. 16:27; 11:23-24).

We are not told where Hades is located, but some believe that paradise may be in heaven itself. While it is true that the righteous dead will be with the Lord or in His presence (Phi. 1:23; 2

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Cor. 5:6-8), paradise is not located in the part of heaven where the Father resides. When Jesus died, He went to paradise (Lk. 23:43), yet after He rose from the dead He told Mary, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father (Jn. 20:17)." Since He had not yet ascended to His Father, and He had been in paradise before this, teaches us that paradise is not in the same place as the Father. Jesus also teaches us that when He comes again, we will then be where He is (Jn. 14:2-3).

On the Day of Judgment, Jesus 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. 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 (1 Thes. 4:16-17)." This will be His second and final coming (Heb. 9:28). Notice, there isn't going to be a secret coming of Jesus because everyone will see Him (Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7), yet no one knows when it will happen (Mat. 24:36). On that day, both the righteous and unrighteous will be resurrected from the dead (Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Dan. 12:2-3). Since everyone will be resurrected on a single day, this disproves the rapture view because it teaches there are three separate resurrections that occur years apart. On that day, Jesus will destroy death and He will deliver the kingdom/church to the Father in heaven (1 Cor. 15: 20-28; Jn. 14:2-3). On that day, the earth will be destroyed as well (2 Pet. 3:10). This proves there won't be seven years of tribulation and then a thousand year reign on the earth as the rapture view teaches.

At the resurrection, the physical bodies of the righteous and unrighteous will be changed to spiritual ones that will last forever, and our spirits will be reunited with these new bodies (1 Cor. 15:35-49). Those who are still alive when Jesus comes again will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51-53). Paul teaches that the righteous will be resurrected just as Christ was and that our spiritual bodies will be like His (Phi. 3:20-21). However, not even the apostle John knew exactly what our new bodies would

look like (1 Jn. 3:2). On that day, the just and unjust will be separated and judged by Jesus (Mat. 25:31- 46; Rev. 20:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jn. 5:22). This is also illustrated in Jesus' parables (Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-48). Those who are just will enter heaven where there will be no more pain, death, or sorrow (Rev. 21:4). However, the unjust will enter hell for eternity where the worm does not die (Mk. 9:42-48), where there is no rest day or night from the torment (Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10), and where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 8:12; 13:42; 25:30). This is why Jesus warns us:

Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Jesus is teaching us not to fear other humans because they only have the ability to kill our physical bodies. They cannot kill our soul. However, God has control over the destination of our souls, which means we should fear Him. When it says that God is able to destroy the soul and body in hell, the word "destroy" doesn't mean that He is going to make us cease to exist. Instead, it carries the idea of laying to waste or ruin. Strong's says, "...To devote or give over to eternal misery in hell." In other words, the unjust will not cease to exist when they face the judgment of hell. Instead, they will be in constant torment and anguish. We can only imagine how horrible hell will be.

This verse also teaches there is nothing wrong with being cremated because it will not affect our souls. Some have taught against cremation, but their teaching is based on tradition. Under the Old Testament, dead bodies were considered unclean (Nub. 19:11-13), and an unburied body was considered a defilement (Deut. 21:22-23). The usual custom in the Bible was to bury someone (Gen. 49:29-31; Jos. 8:29; Jn. 19:42; Acts 5:10; 8:2). It was considered an act of respect and kindness (2 Sam. 2:4-6). Under the Old Testament, some of those who had dishonored God were burned as a form of punishment (Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Jos.

7:15, 24-26; 2 Kgs. 23:19-20). Josiah burned the bones of men on the altar that King Jeroboam had created in Bethel to defile it and fulfill a prophecy (1 Kgs. 13:1-2; 2 Kgs. 23:16-20). Some would burn their children as a sacrifice to the false god Molech (2 Kgs. 16:3; Jer. 32:35). Other times they would burn a body out of necessity as with King Saul and his sons (1 Sam. 31:12-13). Also, Amos teaches us that cremation became a common practice at one point (Amos 6:10). Since the Old Testament primarily associates the burning of bodies in a negative way, this explains why some are not comfortable with being cremated. However, we need to understand that it doesn't matter how our bodies are disposed of because eventually they will all turn to dust while our spirits live on forever (Ecc. 12:7). No matter what condition our physical bodies are in, on the Day of Judgment, they will be transformed into spiritual bodies without flesh and bones that will last for eternity (1 Cor. 15:35-58). Nothing is impossible for God (Mk. 10:27)!

While the Bible doesn't give us every detail about what happens at our death or at the Day of Judgment, it teaches us everything we need to know to be prepared for that day (2 Tim. 3:16-17). First, we must become a Christian, which means we must hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), believe (Jn 3:16), repent (Lk. 13:3) confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Once we become a Christian, we must remain faithful to the Lord until the day we die if we want to receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). The question becomes, "Are you prepared?" If you died today, would go to paradise or to the place of torment? While you are still breathing, you have the opportunity to become a servant of righteousness. What destination will you choose, paradise or torment?

Joshua 24:15 "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ...
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