

Thou Shalt Surely Die

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INTRODUCTION

Ministers, evangelists, authors of books about the Bible, doctors, scientists, philosophers, spokesmen for religions other than the Christian religion, and professing atheists have written or spoken millions of words over the centuries on the subject of death.

Some say they are teaching what the Bible says; some say they don't believe what the Bible says; and others ignore the Bible.

If you believe that life is your most precious possession, and that death will eventually rob you of it, then we believe you will be interested, not in what man says about death, but in what God, the author of life, has to say about it.

God's Word on this subject, as on all others, is Truth; it is important; it is everlasting and unchangeable.

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. (Ps. 119:89)

. . . for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. (Ps. 138:2)

. . . yea, let God be true, but [even though this should make] every man a liar. (Rom. 3:4)

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light [concerning this matter] in them. (Is. 8:20)

This book was written for those who will sit down and quietly and diligently follow a presentation of what God's Word says on this subject which touches every living creature. We ask that you examine the arguments and conclusions closely; for what a man believes about death has a great effect on what he does with his life.

SECTION ONE: WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

DEATH: FRIEND? OR FOE?

Is death an enemy of man? Or is death a great friend, especially to ailing or aged persons? What is death? Is it the absence of life? Or is it a continuance of life on a different plane or in a different location?

It is common to say of loved ones who have died: "They have gone to be with the Lord." At funeral services ministers tell the people: "Our beloved brother is not here; he is in heaven. These bodily remains are but the tenement of clay in which he lived while on earth. Though we will greatly miss him, he is now in that fair land where all tears are wiped away and no sorrows ever come. Some glad day we will be reunited with him."

What he has said is that the man himself did not really die, but that he merely passed to another state of existence, leaving his dead body for the living to bury.

In that view, death can be defined simply as a different kind of life, and we need not fear death, because in reality there is no death of ourselves, only the death of our body.

Strangely enough, upon being badly injured or taken seriously ill, most who profess to believe this will do everything in their power to keep from dying! They will employ expensive medical assistance, perhaps even going into debt to pay for it; they will pray and solicit the prayers of others that they might be healed and so continue to live. Many travel hundreds or thousands of miles, often with great difficulty and expense, to request prayer from some "healing" evangelist.

Although they may not realize it, by these actions they are demonstrating a

lack of faith in what they profess to believe about dying. According to their own stated belief in what will happen to them if their body dies, they will enter into “heaven” to be in the very presence of Jesus Christ. What experience in a continued life on earth could compare with their life after death? Why would any who believe this want to postpone such a blessing? Why should friends or relatives pray that God would keep the injured or ill one from his most glorious reward by maintaining him in life upon the earth?

Quite obviously there is an inconsistency between what they claim to believe and what they really seem to believe as testified by their actions.

The inconsistency in part is that, although they may claim to believe that death is a friend, when death actually approaches, they cannot help but treat death as an enemy. Is this because they know, deep down in their innermost being, that God is right when he says death is not a friend to man, but an enemy?

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:26)

We should not feel we are different if we treat death as an enemy. Hezekiah, in the Old Scriptures, knew that death was not his friend. When Isaiah prophesied that Hezekiah was soon going to die, ***“Hezekiah wept sore.” (Is. 38:3)*** He then prayed, and God added fifteen years to his life. Why was Hezekiah unhappy with the thought he would soon die? Did he not believe he would be with God when he died? Hezekiah himself gives us the answer:

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. (Is. 38:18, 19)

Hezekiah understood death to be an enemy. He believed that when he died, he would go down into “the grave,” where he would not be able to praise God or hope for His truth.

The fact that death is an enemy also is taught in the New Scriptures. Epaphroditus, one of Paul's disciples. . . ***. . . was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. (Phil. 2:27)***

Both Hezekiah and Epaphroditus would have been deprived of many years of life, had not God in mercy intervened. Their lives were spared, and they rejoiced that God had added more years to their lives. Another example showing death to be an enemy is found in Jeremiah 31:15, 16:

Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

Matthew tells us that this prophecy was fulfilled when King Herod killed all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem in his attempt to kill Jesus shortly after His birth. These children “were not,” that is, they were killed.

“The land of the enemy” is not heaven, but death, the state described by the

words, “they were not.” The “not” in the Greek here is *ouk*, which always expresses full and direct negation (independently and absolutely). The weaker and conditional negative *me* was not used. The stronger negative was also used in Jeremiah 31:15.

The Bible says that Rahel (or, Rachel) shall see them when they “come again” (are resurrected) from this land. But meanwhile, “they are [were] not,” for they died and ceased to exist consciously.

Therefore we see that some very godly people considered death to be an enemy and hated and feared it. Let us now begin a deep search of the Holy Bible to see why they felt as they did about death.

IS THERE DEATH AFTER LIFE?

In Romans 5:12 we read:

Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned. — (Concordant Version)

In other words, as a consequence of Adam's sin, death has “passed through into all mankind,” and it is on account of death operating in mankind that all men sin. For light on the meaning of the term “death,” let us turn to the historical record of the event mentioned above in Romans 5:12.

After God formed man from the dust of the ground, He placed him in the garden of Eden. He then imposed upon him this well-known restriction:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

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. (Gen. 2:16, 17)

The marginal rendering of the last phrase is significant: “Dying, thou shalt die.” In other words, the dying process (i.e., “mortality”) was to begin to operate in Adam the very day he ate of the forbidden tree, and this was to ultimately result in his actual death.

In Genesis 3:19 the “death” which Adam ultimately was to die is graphically described:

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

It appears that none of the living creatures of Gen. 1 had any existence prior to their creation, and Adam had no prior existence before God formed him from the ground and made him “a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). Thus God must have meant by that last verse that when Adam died and returned unto the ground, he would return to his previous state of non-existence.

According to the early chapters of Genesis then, death can simply be defined as the opposite of life.

If this is true, then there should be other Bible passages which treat life and death as opposites. Consider the following:

(1) *Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get*

you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. (Gen. 42:1, 2)

(2) And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die. . . (Gen. 43:8)

(3) Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die. (Gen. 47:19)

(4) Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die. . . But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die. (Num. 4:18-20)

(5) Let Reuben live, and not die. (Deut. 33:6)

(6) Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land. . . that ye may live, and not die. (2 Kings 18:32)

(7) In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. (2 Kings 20: 1 and Is. 38:1)

(8) I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. (Ps. 118:17)

(9) But if the wicked will turn from all his sins. . . he shall surely live, he shall not die. (Ez. 18:21)

(10) Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions

that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. (Ez. 18:28)

(11) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

The Scriptures teach that Adam's sin brought death to us, and Christ's death and resurrection brought life to us. Therefore, we can conclude that death is not another form of life; death is the opposite of life, and in fact, death is the absence of life.

The Bible has much more to say on this subject. Let us go on.

DEATH IS LIKENED UNTO SLEEP

God inspired Moses, Job, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, Luke, Paul, and Peter to refer to the dead as being asleep. We read in Deut. 31:16 . . .

And the Lord God said unto Moses, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.

This same expression, "sleep with thy fathers," also occurs 36 times in the books of the Kings and Chronicles alone. Thus it would seem that God desires that His people should become familiar with this inspired phrase. However, this terminology did not long survive apostolic times. It was seldom used during the middle ages, during which time Catholicism held sway. It was revived briefly during the Protestant Reformation, but it has died out once again. Today we usually only hear it when the Scriptures are read.

So it should be interesting and perhaps informative to read some of those Scriptures and see what the inspired Bible writers said concerning the connection between sleep and death:

(1) *So man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.* (Job 14:12)

(2) *Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.* (Ps. 13:3)

(3) *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when [and not before] I awake, [at the resurrection] with thy likeness.* (Ps. 17:15)

(4) *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. . .* (Dan. 12:2)

(5) *But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest [“sleep”] and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.* (Dan. 12:13)

(6) *. . . for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.* (Job 7:21)

We find this same concept used throughout the New Scriptures as well:

(1) *Weep not; for she is not dead, but sleepeth, and they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.* (Luke 8:52, 53)

(2) *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep. . . Howbeit Jesus spake of his death. . .* (John 11:11, 13)

(3) *For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised . . . then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.* (1 Cor. 15:16-18)

(4) *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them which slept.* (1 Cor. 15:20)

(5) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.* [or, “will God, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him” — C.V., 1 Thess. 4:14]

(6) *. . . we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [“precede”] them which are asleep.* (1 Thess. 4:15)

Thus we see that in both the Old and the New Scriptures death finds an exact parallel in the condition of sleep. Both in sleep and in death men are unconscious of time and events that occur around them.

Martin Luther, the prince of the Reformers, wrote concerning the unconscious sleep of the dead:

We should learn to view our death in the right light, so that we need not become alarmed on account of it, as unbelief does; because in Christ it is indeed not death, but a fine, sweet and brief sleep, which brings us release from this vale of tears, from sin and from the fear and extremity of real death, and from all the misfortunes of this life, and we shall be secure and without care, rest sweetly and gently for a brief moment, as on a sofa, until the time when he shall call and awaken us together with all his dear children to his eternal glory and joy. For since we call it a sleep, we know that we shall not remain in it, but be again awakened and live, and that the time during which we sleep, shall seem no longer than if we had just fallen asleep. Hence, we shall censure ourselves that we were surprised or alarmed at such a sleep in the hour of death, and suddenly come alive out of the grave and from decomposition, and entirely well, fresh, with a pure, clear, glorified life, meet our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the clouds. . . Scripture everywhere affords such consola-

tion, which speaks of the death of the saints, as if they fell asleep and were gathered to their fathers, that is, had overcome death through this faith and comfort in Christ, and awaited the resurrection, together with the saints who preceded them in death. (from "A Compend of Luther's Theology," ed. by Hugh Thomson, p. 242).

— There are 125 references to "soul sleep" in Luther's writings. Although he appears to have wavered in his views, Luther died believing in "soul sleep." (See T.N. Ketola, "A Study of M.L. Teaching Concerning the State of the Dead"). —

Those who believe that man himself retains consciousness after death teach that consciousness is independent of the body. Thus, when the body dies, the consciousness remains unaffected. But this notion is proven daily to be false. No man remains conscious while his body sleeps, for sleep itself is an unconscious state of being.

Some may insist dreaming while the body is asleep proves that the mind operates independently of the body. However, researchers have found that dreams occur as the physical body is disturbed. As an example, if the person is cold, he may dream of snow. If he is hungry, he may dream of food. If he has had a deep, emotional experience that day, or seen an exciting movie, these will bring on dreams.

Comas are unnatural sleep brought on by injury, drugs, or illness. The body is alive, but decreased activity of some part of the body has made the mind unconscious. No doctor who has had medical experience would dare insist that mind consciousness increases as body life and brain function decreases. Natural sleep, comas or other types of unconsciousness seem to verify that con-

sciousness of the mind exists only in a living body.

Paul admonished Timothy to "hold fast the form ("pattern" - C.V.) of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). It is important that we use the inspired words of God when we speak of death, lest we should be led astray in our understanding of it.

UNCONSCIOUSNESS IN SHEOL-HADES

Under a column headed "With the Lord," a weekly church paper recently noted the deaths of two ministers of their particular denomination. Are these two ministers really in the presence of God in a conscious state? If so, they most certainly must be joyfully praising the Lord with all those who preceded them.

But what does the Bible say of the believers who have died? King David wrote:

The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. (Ps. 115:17)

David tells us that they do not praise the Lord, because they go down to a place of silence. The Septuagint rendering of verses 17 and 18 is very significant:

The dead shall not praise thee, O Lord, nor any that go down to hades. But we, the living, will bless the Lord, from henceforth and to the age.

In the original Hebrew of the Old Scriptures the dead were said to go to sheol. The comparable Greek word in the New Scriptures is hades. When the Judean translators of the Septuagint Bible (280 B.C.) came to the word sheol, they always rendered it with the Greek hades. When the writers of the New

Scriptures quoted a passage from the Hebrew, they rendered sheol as hades. An example:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol. (Ps. 16:10)

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hades. (Acts 2:27)

The Hebrew word “sheol” occurs 65 times in the original texts. The translators of the King James Version rendered it “hell” 31 times, “grave” 31 times, and “pit” 3 times (see Strong’s or Young’s Concordances for verification). However, none of these 65 occurrences of “sheol” depict a place where the dead suffer conscious torment.

David recognized that he would go to sheol, but he had faith that God would not leave him there forever. Job, too, knew that he would have to wait in sheol until the resurrection:

If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. (Job 14:14)

The Septuagint rendering of this same passage is very enlightening:

For if a man should die, shall he live again? Having accomplished the days of his life? I will wait till I exist again.

Thus, according to the Septuagint translation, Job said that he would have to wait in the grave until he existed again at the resurrection. Meanwhile. . .

If I wait, the grave [sheol] is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. (Job 17:13)

Notice that Job did not say that his body would go to a place of darkness, but “I have made my bed in the darkness.” Sheol is not only a place of silence and darkness, but it is also a place where all mental activity ceases:

For in death there is no remembrance of thee; [God] in the grave [sheol] who shall give thee thanks? (Ps. 6:5)

While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. [Sept., “as long as I exist” — Ps. 146:2]

If while I live equals as long as I exist, then conversely, when David ceased to live, he also ceased to exist. David recognized that he had to do all of his praising God before he died, because there was no praise or remembrance of God in sheol. David also said of death:

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. (Ps. 146:4)

Please note that “perish” is from the Hebrew word “abad,” which signifies “to be lost.” At death, man loses consciousness.

The Bible tells us that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and he too confirms what his father David said:

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything. (Eccl. 9:5)

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 [sheol] whither thou goest. (Eccl. 9:10)

There are some who tell us that we cannot take these quotations in Ecclesiastes at face value, since Solomon was discoursing on “things “under the sun.” Others claim these statements are invalid, because Solomon was “backslidden” when he penned them. But what saith the Scriptures?

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men. . . (1 Kings 4:29-31)

And God said unto him. . . I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. (1 Kings 3:11,12)

And further, because the Preacher [Solomon] was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, yea, he set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth. (Eccl. 12:9, 10)

Those who disparage Solomon's writings on death overlook the fact that Solomon's statements on the condition of the dead are in total agreement with David's and Job's. Are we to believe that they too were backslidden and their writings untrustworthy? God forbid! King Hezekiah also said:

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day. (Is. 38:18, 19)

Hezekiah was not saying there was no hope of resurrection for the dead. He said that the dead cannot hope because they have no consciousness. Only the living can praise God or can hope.

Some who deny Solomon's statements above, will quote certain phrases of Solomon's which they think prove the

dead are alive. We will examine them in detail a little further on.

The above-quoted Scriptures are not isolated passages. There are many other Scriptures which coincide perfectly with them. The preponderance of God's Word teaches that the dead are actually dead in their graves, unconscious (asleep), and are awaiting their respective resurrections. The prophets all were agreed upon this issue in contrast to all of the other false religions of the nations surrounding Israel. Jesus placed His stamp of approval upon their doctrines by telling two of his disciples:

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. (Luke 24:25)

There is only one man who ever walked this earth who is immortal, and He is the resurrected Christ. . .

. . . the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality. (1 Tim. 6:15, 16)

Christ is immortal and is seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20). He conquered death in His resurrection, and thus we can be assured that we too shall conquer death and mortality at his coming.

Is the artist's conception (on the next page) the Scriptural view of "sheol-hades"? Or is it merely a figment of man's darkened imagination?



God says of “sheol-hades”: *“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.”* (Job. 3:17-18)

DEATH IS A RETURN

There is a significant point many in Christendom seem to have overlooked. God does not say that He formed man's body of the dust of the ground. No, God says He formed man of the dust. Only theologians say it was the body.

Note carefully the wording of the Scriptures that we quote:

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 soul. (Gen. 2:7)

That Adam was truly of the earth is made especially clear in the Concordant rendition of 1 Cor. 15:45:

The first man, Adam, “became a living soul” . . . the first man was out of the earth, soilish . . . (1 Cor. 15:45, 47, C.V.)

Adam was apparently complete, physically, but he was without “life.” Upon receiving life, he then became “a living soul.”

The important point to remember is that, except for the breath of life itself, man was totally from “the dust of the ground.”

That is why the Bible then states that when life leaves man, it is man himself that returns to the ground.

Note God's explanation of this return, beginning with His direct statement to Adam:

In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (Gen. 3:19)

All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. (Job 34:15)

Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, return, ye children of men. (Ps. 90:3)

Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. (Ps. 104:29)

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. (Ps. 146:4)

All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Eccl. 3:20)

Note the personal pronouns thy and thou in all of the above passages. If our theologians and Bible teachers would but read

them, they would see that it is man himself who returns to dust-not just his body with man himself then going somewhere else.

SPIRIT, SOUL, BODY

In any discussion of death as a return, we must consider the relationship between spirit, soul, and body, since Solomon did write:

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (Eccl. 12:7)

The Hebrew word for spirit is ruach, and its Greek equivalent is pneuma. Both words literally mean “breath” (air in motion). When God breathed into man the “breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), he came alive. Ruach is translated both breath and spirit in the King James Version, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The spirit is not man. The soul, and NOT the spirit, constitutes the individual, and is the seat of the conscious personality.

In the Scriptures, the following identifying marks of a conscious personality are ascribed to the soul:

1. KNOWLEDGE (Joshua 23:14; Ps. 139:4; Prov. 2:10; 19:2).

2. THOUGHT (Esther 4:13; Prov. 23:7; Ps. 13:2).

3. MEMORY (Lam. 3:20; Deut. 4:9; 11:18).

4. LOVE, JOY, AND DELIGHT (Deut. 6:5; 13:3; Ps. 35:9; 86:4; 94:19; Matt. 22:37)

5. BITTERNESS, DISTRESS, IMPATIENCE (Gen.42:21; Num. 21:4; Judg. 10:16; 16:16; 1 Sam. 1:10; 22:2; 30:6; Ps. 143:11; Prov. 21:23).

6. MOURNING, SORROW, GRIEF (Job 14:22; Jer. 31:25; 1 Sam. 2:33; Ps. 42:5).

7. ABHORRENCE, HATE (Lev. 26:15; Ps. 11:5; 107:18; Isa. 1:14).

One doesn't need a college diploma to see that if the above are ascribed to the soul, and the soul “dies” (Ezek. 18:4), then the above marks of conscious personality cease, or “die” as well (1+1=2)!

Genesis 2:7 makes it plain that when God breathed the “breath of life” into Adam, Adam was made “a living soul,” not a spirit. We have already seen from 1 Cor. 15 that Adam's origin from the earth made him an “earthy” creature, whereas Christ was the spiritual being from heaven.

Thus, when the spirit “returns to God,” that life force leaves man, and he dies, returning to non-existence, i.e. to the dust of the ground.

For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (Gen. 3:19)

Let us for a moment consider an electric light bulb and its operation.

The bulb itself corresponds to body (physically complete, but without life). The electricity needed to light the bulb corresponds to spirit (or, the breath of life from God which energizes the body). The union of the bulb with electricity produces light, corresponding to soul (awareness and sensation).

When the electricity is cut off, what happens to the light? Does it go somewhere?

Does the light continue to exist in another place? No, when the electricity is cut off, light ceases to be (i.e. it dies).

So it is with “spirit and soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23). When the breath of life, or spirit, is cut off from the body, soul ceases to be (i.e. it dies). It does not continue to exist independently of body and spirit in another state, or location.

As we speak of an energized bulb as “a light,” so also we speak of an energized or living body as “a soul.”

Some confusion is engendered, of course, because the King James translators rendered the Hebrew word ruach both “breath” and “spirit.” An example is Psalm 104, where David used the Hebrew ruach when writing of both man and animals:

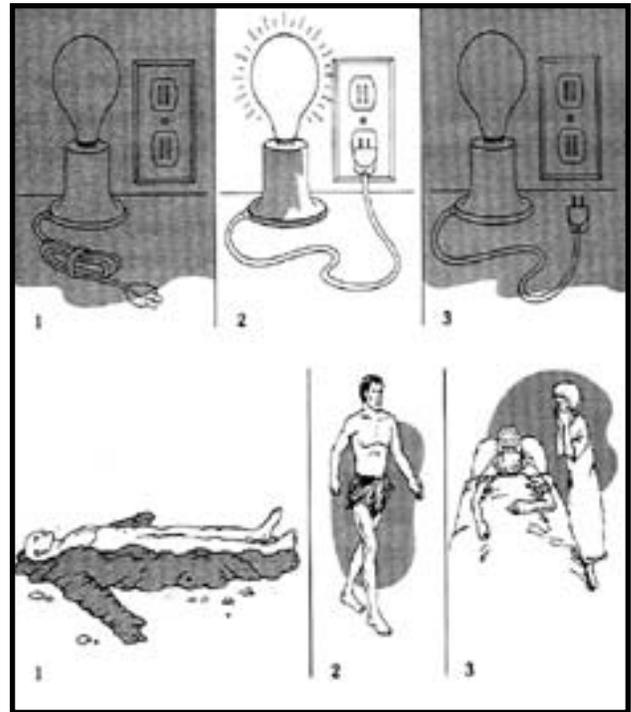
. . . Thou takest away their breath [ruach], they die, and return to the dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit [ruach], they are created. . . (vs. 29, 30)

David knew that the ruach (whether translated breath or spirit) was not the creature itself, but rather that life-force from God which gave the creature life (as electricity gives the bulb light).

David's son Solomon knew this, for he wrote about both men and beasts:

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath [ruach] . . . (Eccl. 3:19)

We previously quoted another passage where David combines the truth that it is ruach which gives man life, and when ruach is removed, man himself returns to the earth:



His breath [ruach] goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. (Ps. 146:4)

Those who insist that man is a spiritual, immortal being who returns to God at death must also teach that man pre-existed in heaven before the world was created. Man cannot return to God unless he was with God previously. Thus, the controversy can be reduced to a single question: Did man originate in heaven in an immortal state, or was man created from the dust of the ground?

Pre-existence is refuted by the Word of God just as certainly as is his continued existence after his body dies. In order to live again man must be resurrected!

RESURRECTION: IMPOSSIBLE IF THE DEAD ARE ALIVE!

Resurrection is a return from the dead. God says nothing in His Word about resurrecting men's spirits out of heaven. It is axiomatic that the living cannot be resurrected, for only the dead can be raised

from the dead. The story of man's life, death, and resurrection is summarized in **Psalm 104:29, 30:**

Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, [spirit] they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewes the face of the earth.

In other words, when God removes his breath (spirit) from man, he dies and returns to dust. The resurrection is a re-creation from the state of non-existence. In this way the earth and man will be renewed. Ezekiel says the same thing:

. . . Breath came into them, and they lived. . . Behold, O my people, I will open your graves. . . and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live. (Ez. 37:10-14)

Note three important things in this Scripture, all of which are generally overlooked:

1. Breath came into them and they lived. it does not say-nor is it true-that a “never-dying soul,” or a conscious entity returned to their bodies and caused them to live.

2. God says, I will . . . put my spirit [the breath of God] in you, and ye shall live. What caused them to live? The first part says it was “breath” and the last part says “my Spirit;” the breath of God breathed into their nostrils as with Adam in Genesis 2:7.

The most complete list of references to the word resurrection that we know is found in Young's Analytical Concordance. The concordance in the back of your Bible will have some of them, but not all. We will not quote the passages themselves, but we will give all of the references in the

New Scriptures: Matthew 22:23,28,30,31; Mark 12:18, 23; Luke 14:14; 20:27, 33, 35, 36; John 5:29; 11:24, 25; Acts 1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18,32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21; Romans 1:4; 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:12, 13,21,42; Phil. 3:10,11; 2 Tim. 2:18; Heb. 6:2; 11:35; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:21; Rev. 20:5, 6; and Matthew 27:53.

The above references speak of “the resurrection,” “the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” and most frequently, “the resurrection of [or from] the dead.” You may be surprised to hear that in no single instance do we read of “the resurrection of the body.” This is a phrase we hear everywhere in our day, but it absolutely cannot be found in God's Word. The phrase is very misleading and gives a false view of the resurrection, as well as a false view of both the nature and the abode of the dead: the grave.

There is, however, one passage which is often misunderstood to teach the resurrection of the body. **Isaiah 26:19** says:

Thy dead men shall live, together with my [Isaiah's] dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust. . .

The first part of this verse speaks of “thy dead men, “ not “the bodies of those who have died.” The last part of the same verse says, “Ye that dwell in the dust;” not “the bodies of them that dwell in dust.” These two parts of the same sentence do not mention “bodies” at all.

“Thy dead body” does not suggest that only Isaiah's “body” will be raised, while his soul or spirit will come down from heaven and re-enter his body. No, not at all. This passage simply illustrates that one cannot separate the body from the person.

To settle this matter further, let us consult two other translations of this passage, the Concordant Version and the Septuagint. The Concordant Version is a very literal translation, based upon the Hebrew texts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Syriac. It reads:

Live shall your death-doomed! Their carcasses shall arise! Awake and jubilate, tabernaclers of the soil! For a night mist of lights is your night mist. And the land is causing the healers to fall.

The Septuagint translation is based upon a Hebrew text that is about 1,000 years older than any now in our possession. It reads in English:

The dead shall rise, and they that are in the tombs shall be raised, and they that are in the earth shall rejoice. . .

There is no mention of dead bodies being raised, it simply speaks of the resurrection of “the dead” and “they that are in the tombs.”

Pointing to the King James translation of Isaiah 26: 19 to prove the resurrection of the body separate from the man himself not only goes against the rest of the King James, but the other translations show the argument is based upon an unclear translation of this verse in the King James.

All three translations speak of the after-death location of those who have died in terms which preclude “heaven”:

King James: ***“in the dust”***

Concordant: (in) ***“the soil”***

Septuagint: ***“in the tombs. . . in the earth.”***

The overwhelming evidence of Scripture proves that man himself surely dies and goes to the earth. and it is man himself who shall surely be resurrected from the dead.

The serpent's lie, (“thou shalt not surely die”), is the basis of all false religions. Thus, the doctrine of man's immortality is the common denominator of all false religions, and by this doctrine they automatically deny the resurrection of the dead.

Most of Christendom, including Liberals, Evangelicals, and Catholics, do not believe in the resurrection of the dead — Easter observance, appearances, affirmations, and declarations to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Liberals deny both the resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of the body. The Evangelicals, who say they believe the Bible to be God's inspired Word, do not openly deny the resurrection, but they change the doctrine to mean the resurrection of the body. They attempt to retain “the best of two worlds” by accepting both that men go to heaven when they die and that dead men shall be resurrected from the dust of the ground.

We have proven those doctrines to be mutually exclusive. We cannot be both dead and alive at the same time; we cannot be both mortal and immortal at the same time; we cannot be both in heaven and in the grave at the same time. Trying to believe two opposing doctrines results in doublemindedness and James says:

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:8)

God is warning us through James that a man who accepts opposing ideas on one subject is unstable in relation to all things. Accepting confusion in religious

doctrines conditions one to accept error in other things as well.

The pulpit, radio, T.V., movies, newspapers, books, and magazines continually impose on us this “double mindedness” in relation to the dead. There is more of this propaganda than most people realize. On the next page is illustrated how all of our people, from infancy to old age, are deluged with this “life-after-death” propaganda.



Perhaps trying to believe and teach two mutually exclusive doctrines is the reason we find so much instability in the professing Christian Church.

William Tyndale (1484-1536), the great English Reformer, recognized the inherent contradiction between these two doctrines. He wrote:

The true faith putteth the resurrection, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers did put that the souls did ever live. And the pope joineth the spiritual doctrines of Christ and the fleshly doctrine of philosophers together; things so contrary that they cannot agree, no more than the spirit and the flesh do in a Christian man. And because the fleshly-minded pope consenteth unto heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the Scripture to stablish it (“An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue”).

God’s Word says that the resurrection will occur:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trump shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. . . so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then [not before] shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (1 Cor. 15:52, 54)

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

Commenting upon Sir Thomas More’s false interpretation of these passages, Tyndale wrote with sarcasm:

Nay, Paul, thou art unlearned; go to Master More, and learn a new way. We be not most miserable, though we rise not again; for our souls go to heaven as soon as we be dead, and are there in as great joy as Christ that is risen again. And I marvel that Paul had not comforted the Thessalonians with that doctrine, if he had wist it, that the souls of their dead had been in joy; as he did with the resurrection, that their dead should rise again. If the souls be in heaven, in as great glory as the angels, after your doctrine, shew me what cause should be of the resurrection?

We can only conclude that death is an enemy, an outrage, the most terrible of all tragedies. It is total, affecting the whole man.

Paul stresses the totality of death and the absolute need for the resurrection, when he states that if the dead rise not, ***“let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.”*** (1 Cor. 15:32)

If there is to be no resurrection, even Christians are without hope, for Paul also says:

. . . they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (1 Cor. 15:18)

The Bible truth, as we have seen, is that man does surely die. “Inherent immortality” is a chimera, a figment of man's darkened imagination.

Our Lord Jesus Christ surely died for the sin of the world and overcame death by His resurrection. The death and resurrection of Christ has proven by example that His promise is true; we shall be raised immortal at His coming-at the last trump.

THE TWO TYPES OF DEATH

We have seen from Genesis 2:16, 17 that the penalty for Adam's transgression was mortality, that is, a dying process. We have also seen that according to Romans 5:12, this mortality was passed down to all men as a consequence of Adam's sin, rather than our own. In other words, God did not wait until we committed our first sin to make us mortal. Rather, we were all born mortal, not as a result of our own sin, but on account of Adam's sin.

Therefore, this type of death which we call mortality is experienced by all men and indeed by all of creation.

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast. . . All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Eccl. 3:19, 20)

However, there is another kind of death which only the wicked among men experience. It is called the second death.

But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death. (Rev. 21:8)

The righteous ones who shall be resurrected to life, however, shall not experience this second death, for we read:

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power. (Rev. 20:6)

We see, then, that there is a basic difference between the type of death caused by Adam's sin and the second death. The first type, which we shall call "the first death," befalls everyone without exception, whereas the second death befalls only the wicked. Also, we see that the first death began with Adam, while the second death is yet future.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [hades] delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Rev. 20:13, 14)

Thus, when all the dead who died the first death because of their mortality are raised from that death, the first death shall then be ended by being itself cast into the second death.

So what is the purpose of the first death? We read in **Job 21 :28-30**:

For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? And where are the dwelling places of the wicked? Have ye not asked them that go by the way? And do ye not know their tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.

The same statement is made in **2 Peter 2:9 . . .**

The Lord knoweth how. . . to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

According to Young's Analytical Concordance, the words rendered reserved in both cases mean "held back," or to hold in abeyance. Job says that the

wicked are held back "to the day of destruction," and "the day of wrath." Peter says that God holds back "the unjust unto the day of judgment."

In other words, the dead are not punished for their own-sins before the judgment, for we read:

Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? (John 7:51)

No, God does not pass sentence against any man for his sins until he has received a fair trial.

However, let one thing be clearly understood. Righteous Abel was the first man to die. Between his death and Christ's return and the judgment is a span of many thousands of years. But because there is no consciousness in the grave, there is also no consciousness of time. It shall be very much like when we fall into a deep sleep at night, and then morning seems to come almost the same instant that we fall asleep.

Sleep is thus the ideal condition in which to reserve the dead until they are resurrected, whether to immortality or to condemnation. It prevents men from being rewarded or punished before they are judged, while at the same time it eliminates all consciousness of time.

The purpose, then, of the first death is to reserve men in a state of timeless unconsciousness until the judgment, when they shall receive "every man according to their works."

We now have given substantial proof from the Bible that man does surely die, and that there is no life after death until the resurrection. But we cannot stop here, for no matter how many Bible passages

one uses to prove the dead really die, some minister will always say, “But what about. . . ?” and then quote (or misquote) some other passage of Scripture.

Since it is our desire that our readers will be able to answer every objection with Truth, we shall now go on and examine every Bible passage and argument used by those who attempt to deceive you into believing that man does not surely die.

— SECTION TWO — OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

RACHEL'S SOUL DEPARTS

And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. (Gen. 35:18)

The Septuagint rendering of this passage is helpful:

And it came to pass in her giving up the ghost . . . (for she was dying)

Genesis 35:18 is divinely inspired and contradicts nothing that we have put forth thus far. We have seen that at death the spirit returns to God (Eccl. 12:7); the body goes to the tomb (Eccl. 9:10); and the soul “goes” to sheol-hades, a state of unconscious oblivion.

When Christ died, His spirit returned to God (Luke 23:46); His soul “went” to sheol-hades (Acts 2:22-32); while His body was placed in a tomb (Matt. 27:59, 60). So Jesus Himself really did die for our sins.

Thus the “departure” of Rachel's soul from her body does not prove that her soul continued to exist in a conscious state.

SAMUEL'S “RESURRECTION” (1 Sam. 28:7-20)

In this passage God refused to answer Saul's prayers, because Saul refused to obey God. So Saul sought out the witch of Endor and asked her:

. . . I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. (1 Sam. 28:8)

When the witch asked him in verse 11 who she should bring up he said, “Bring me up Samuel.”

It appears from the next verses that Saul himself did not see any person, but had to ask the witch what she saw. She answered, “An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle.” Verse 14 then says “And Saul perceived that it was Samuel. . .” Saul “perceived” this from her description, not from what he himself saw. Accepting her description as being that of Samuel would have led him into the further error of accepting the voice as that of Samuel. 1 Chronicles 10:13 tells us plainly that Saul had inquired of a familiar spirit rather than Samuel:

So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it.

This translation has added some extra words to the original text. Leaving those extra uninspired words out, the last part of the verse reads:

. . . and also for asking. . . of . . . a familiar spirit, to inquire. . .

Thus we see that Saul died, because he inquired of a familiar spirit in violation of God's Law (Deut. 18:10-14). The witch deceived Saul into thinking that he was talking to Samuel's ghost, just as spiritist mediums do today.

Our first objection to accepting this incident as proof the dead are alive is that it is quite certain that it was not Samuel to whom Saul spoke.

Our second objection is that even if we accept that Samuel appeared alive in this instance, that in itself does not prove that he was alive anywhere before or after his appearance.

Our third objection is perhaps the most serious and should be the most convincing to thoughtful Christians. If we teach or believe that Samuel appeared alive to the witch and Saul, we would then have to attribute to this evil witch the power to resurrect men from the dead, even if only temporarily! The Bible attributes no such power as that or the power to even contact the dead to any witch or any other person. Believing Christians should think long and hard before they accept any minister's claim that this was indeed Samuel.

The whole thing was simply a king violating God's command. As we saw above, God did not accuse him of talking to Samuel, but of talking with one who had a "familiar spirit." "That the familiar spirit spoke words which later came to pass does not prove it was Samuel. God could have caused this familiar spirit to speak truth as easily as He caused Balaam to pronounce good upon Israel in Numbers 23 and 24 even when Balaam's intent was to pronounce evil.

THE SOUL OF THE WIDOW'S SON (1 Kings 17:21, 22)

And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. (1 Kings 17:21, 22)

This passage is similar to the case of Rachel in Genesis 35:18. When the child died, his spirit returned to God; his soul (consciousness) "went" to sheol-hades, and his body began to decay.



When the Lord heard Elijah's prayer and answered it, the child's spirit was again united with his body, "and he revived." (A similar incident is recorded in 2 Kings 4:18-37 where Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son from the dead.)

ELIJAH'S TRIP INTO HEAVEN (2 Kings 2:11)

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The word heaven used here is from the Hebrew word shanayim, meaning “the heavens, the sky, or the atmosphere.” The word is used in Genesis 1: 7, 8 where God placed water above and below the firmament and then “God called the firmament Heaven.” In other words, God said that there was water above and below the heavens.

Elijah did not ride to heaven on a fiery chariot, as many assume. The account says that “a chariot of fire. . . parted them asunder.” After Elisha was some distance away, “Elijah went up by a whirlwind” (or a tempest, not the chariot of fire). Since there is no wind in outer space, this whirlwind could hardly have transported Elijah all the way to heaven.

Thus we believe that the “heaven” where Elijah went was simply above the ground somewhere. He did not go to the heaven of God's throne, for the Bible records that he was still on the earth 20 years later during the days of King Jehoram:

And there came a writing to him [Jehoram] from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah. . . (2 Chron. 21:12)

As one can plainly see, Elijah was neither dead nor in heaven at this time. This letter (recorded in 2 Chron. 21:12-15) shows us that (1) Elijah was still on the earth, and (2) he was acquainted with contemporary events. Wherever God had taken him in the whirlwind; it is only man's conjecture that it was to God's heaven, for the passage itself certainly does not teach that. Since Elijah was alive on the earth 20 years later, we must

assume that at some time he then died just as all other mortals do. The Bible says:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. (Heb. 9:27)

In their attempt to prove Elijah never died, many combine their erroneous interpretation of Elijah and the whirlwind with Elijah's appearance on the mount with Jesus, which we will consider next.

MOSES AND ELIJAH ON THE MOUNT (Matt. 17:1-3)

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [Greek form of Elijah] talking with Him. (Matt. 17:1-3)

Although this is a favorite passage of those who believe that the dead are alive, we have to look no further than the immediate context to dispell that belief:

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the son of man be risen again from the dead. (Matt. 17:9)

Jesus had not yet been glorified and would not be until He was “risen again from the dead.” Hence, the disciples saw a vision of Christ transfigured in His post-resurrection glory. With Him appeared Moses and Elijah in the vision, showing that once Christ had fulfilled all the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah), He would be exalted and glorified.

Moses and Elijah appeared, not in person, but in a vision.

**... NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD
(Matt. 22:29-32)**

Some who insist that Jesus taught that the dead are alive quote half of Matthew 22:32 to prove their point: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Like other arguments where a part of a passage is used, we must read more of it to find out the truth. Verse 23 tells us to whom Jesus was speaking and what they believed:

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection.

With this in mind, let us read the whole passage, in which Jesus told them they were wrong:

Jesus answered and said unto them, [the Sadducees] ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living. (Matt. 22:29-32)

Thus, Jesus was refuting the Sadducees' doctrine that denied the resurrection of the dead. He was not attempting to prove that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all alive in the grave or in heaven. He was proving that the resurrection was an absolute necessity in order for God to be their God. The Companion Bible

concur with this interpretation in its comment on the passage:

The only conclusion being that they must rise and live again in resurrection in order that He may be their God.

**THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS
(Luke 16:19-31)**

We do not have the space to quote this entire passage, so we suggest that you read it in your Bible before you proceed further.

Many use this passage to prove that the righteous go to heaven when they die, and that the wicked go to a burning hell when they die. However, this is not a historical account of the fate of two literal people. It is a parable. Therefore, it is to be understood figuratively.

Some say that because it speaks of a certain rich man, it refers to a literal man. But other parables begin the same way, which no one would think of taking literally (see Mark 12:1; Luke 12:36; 15:11; 16:1).

Furthermore, if we were to take this parable literally, we should have to teach that all rich men go to hades, and all beggars go to Abraham's bosom, regardless of their actions in this life. Thus, the literal interpretation robs the parable of reasonableness.

The word "hell" used in verse 23 is the Greek word hades. This word hades is found ten times in the New Scriptures, and in no place except in our parable here is it connected in any way with the dead in a state of conscious torment.

Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15 tell us that the town of Capernaum, itself, was to

be brought down into hades. Capernaum was not sent down to a burning hell and-consciously tortured there.

Matthew 16:18 tells us that the gates of hades would not prevail against the Church. Since the gate was the seat of government where the rulers judged the people, this would be a reference to the adversary and the kingdom of darkness not being able to prevail against the Church.

Acts 2:27 and 31 tell us that God did not leave Christ's soul in hades, showing that Christ's soul was there for a short time. Christ certainly did not burn in hades during that time.

The other occurrences (Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14) all speak of "death and hades." These references make no mention of a state of conscious torment.

Some manuscripts insert the word hades in 1 Cor. 15:55, where Paul seems to be quoting Hosea 13:14 loosely, but these manuscripts are incorrect. The three oldest Greek manuscripts (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus) each read thanatos, rather than hades. The thanatos reading is further established as the correct one by Bible numerics (see Panin's Numeric Greek Text).

If the Apostle Paul had used the term hades in his ministry to the "gentiles," they would have misunderstood him completely. In Greek and Roman mythology hades was the place where the dead lived on in a conscious state — much different from the Hebrew concept of sheol-hades. Thus, Paul never used this word in his writings, and there is no record that he ever used it in his sermons either.

We see, therefore, that the concept of hades in the New Scriptures in nine out of

ten examples says absolutely nothing about either a conscious state of the dead or conscious torment in fire. Instead, these nine references all fit the concept of sheol in the Old Scriptures as a place of darkness, silence, and unconscious sleep called death.

But because Christ told a parable in which He used the term hades and said that a certain rich man "went" there, "being in torments," some openly discard all of the plain Bible teaching, in order to take this parable in a literal way.

It is outside the scope of this book to provide a full interpretation of this parable, however we will leave you with this: If it were really only the story of two men, one in hell-fire and one in heaven, why did Jesus embellish it with such symbols as purple and fine linen, gate, sores, crumbs, table, dogs, five brethren, etc.? Why did Jesus have two men talk between "heaven" and "hell" when this is alluded to nowhere else in the entire Bible? Why did He have Abraham refuse to testify to the five unbelieving brethren? That itself needs more explanation than most give it.

No, there is much, much more to this story than "going to heaven or hell." Is it possible it is a parable of Jacob Israel (Lazarus) in the Kingdom (Abraham's bosom) while Esau, who sold his birthright, is kept out?





In Greek and Roman mythology “hades” was a place where the wicked dead suffered conscious torture-much different from the Hebrew concept of “sheol-hades.” The modern churches teach the “hades” of mythology instead of the truth of the Bible.

THE THIEF IN PARADISE (Luke 23:43)

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Many use this verse in support of the position that the dead are really alive. However, the context proves otherwise. The thief had just asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom:

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom. (vs. 42)

It is obvious that Jesus was not on His way to His kingdom as He was hanging on the cross. In His first advent Jesus came to die; in His second advent He will come to claim His kingdom. At this present time, Jesus still has not come as the triumphant conqueror to set up His kingdom and reign on earth with His chosen (Rev. 5:10).

Thus, when the thief asked to be remembered in the kingdom, Jesus assured him that he would be with Him in paradise. Did Jesus side step the thief's question? Or is it possible that He understood the kingdom and paradise to be identical: **Isaiah 51:3** reads:

For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

The Septuagint version renders it in this way:

And I will be comforting you, O Zion, and I comfort all her deserts, and I will place her deserts as paradise and her wilderness as the Lord's paradise. They shall find gladness and exultation in her, confession and the voice of praise.

The Septuagint version is very important to our study, because it shows how the Judeans two centuries before Christ used the word paradise in translating the Old Testament. We see from the above that they used the word paradise in place of Eden and the garden of the Lord. The word paradise obviously was a reference to the Garden of Eden. It was used to describe the original condition of the earth before sin entered. It was also used to describe the future, perfected Kingdom of God, when the earth would again become a “Paradise.”

(Six hundred years ago Dante (a Roman Catholic) went so far as to claim that paradise was on top of purgatory on the far side of the earth.)

The Apostle Paul knew a man who went to paradise:

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago. . . How that he was caught up [lit. away] into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful to utter. (2 Cor. 12:1, 2, 4)

This passage often is read out of context to prove that someone went to paradise when he died. But if the man had died, he would not have been able to tell Paul of the experience. Verse one makes it clear that Paul was speaking of “visions and revelations of the Lord.”

Thus, the man had a vision of paradise. He went there “in the spirit” only, as John did (Rev. 1:10). He saw paradise, the Kingdom of God in its restored condition, which the elect will inherit at the resurrection.

But how can we reconcile this with Jesus seeming to say that they both would be in paradise on the day of their crucifixion? **Luke 23:43**, as written in most modern versions, appears to teach just that:

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

However, a study of the original Greek text tells a different story. The following is the Greek with a literal English translation:

lego . . . “to you I am saying”
semeron . . . “today”
met emou . . . “with me”
ese . . . “you will be”
en to paradeiso . . . “in the paradise.”

“To you I am saying today with me you will be in the paradise.”

You will notice that it reads “saying today,” rather than “you will be today in the paradise.” In other words, Jesus told the dying thief that day: “You will be with me in paradise” (the future kingdom). Thus, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible renders this verse:

And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee this day: With me shalt thou be in paradise.

The Concordant Literal New Testament reads:

And Jesus said to him, “Verily, to you am I saying today, with me shall you be in paradise.”

The phrase to you I am saying today may sound strange to our ears today. However, there were many occasions in the Scriptures when today or this day was used to emphasize a noteworthy day. For example, Moses told Israel:

See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God. . . (Deut. 30:15, 16)

The Companion Bible agrees in its notation on Luke 23:43

To day. Connect this with “I say,” to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion; not with “shalt thou be.”

Thus we conclude that Luke 23:43 teaches that the repentant thief on the cross shall receive a place in the Kingdom of God at the resurrection. The passage cannot be used to prove that the thief was alive that same day in paradise or heaven.



**“SPIRITS IN PRISON. . .”
(1 Pet. 3:18-20)**

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1 Pet. 3:18-20)

This passage has often been taken to mean that when Christ died, He went to hades and preached a sermon to the dead people there. However, it does not say that. The words “went and” do not appear in the original Greek text, but were added later by the translators.

Also, the word “preached” does not mean a revival-type preaching service. The word comes from the Greek *kerusso*, which means “to cry or proclaim as a herald” (Young's Concordance). This proclamation was made to the “spirits in prison,” not to men's souls in hades. Men are never called spirits in the Bible. They are always called souls, as is said of Noah and his family later in the same passage: “eight souls were saved by water.”

Some may object to this on the grounds that Hebrews 12:23 speaks of “the spirits of just men made perfect.” However, the context of that verse shows that it is speaking of the “church,” the true Christians, whose spirits are perfected, or matured.

“Spirit” literally means “breath, “ which gives us life, or which animates us. But the meaning is often extended to refer to the other things that move us to action,

things that motivate us. For example, Paul was motivated by “the spirit of meekness” (1 Cor. 4:21). Thus, Hebrews 12:23 refers to Christians, those who are just, whose spirits, or motivations, have been “made perfect.”

The “spirits in prison” that Peter wrote of are probably the same ones spoken of in Jude 6:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

In Peter's second epistle, he again mentions these “spirits in prison”:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, [literally, “Tartarus,” not hades] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness. . . (2 Pet. 2:4, 5)

We do not propose to explain when or how these “angels” or “spirits” sinned and were imprisoned in chains of darkness. But the context shows clearly that Peter was not speaking of souls in hades.

Thus, 1 Peter 3:18-20 could be paraphrased:

Christ was. . . put to death in the flesh, but resurrected by the Spirit, by which also He proclaimed [something] to the imprisoned spirits, or angels, which were once disobedient in the days of Noah. . .

Christ was resurrected, and it was by this resurrection that He proclaimed

“preached”) to the spirits imprisoned in Tartarus. He did not have to go anywhere to preach—His resurrection was the proclamation.

Some also use 1 Peter 4:6, which says:

For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

They cite this as further “proof” that Christ went to hades and preached an audible sermon to the dead. However, Christ's name is not mentioned here and the passage is really referring to people who had heard the gospel before they died.

The key is an understanding that the gospel has been preached to the world since Adam (Acts 14:17; Ps. 19:1). God Himself “preached before (years ago) the gospel unto Abraham” (Gal. 3:8). All of the Old Testament prophets preached the gospel, for it was “witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom. 3:21).

An epistle written by Clement, Bishop of Rome (Phil. 4:3), to the church at Corinth about A.D. 90, shows that first century Christians understood that the gospel was an Old Testament concept. After speaking of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he adds:

And therefore we who by his will have been called in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves. . . but through faith, by which Almighty God has justified all men from the beginning. . . (1 Clement 32:5)

If, in speaking of the founding fathers of America, we should say that the gospel was preached to them that are dead, sure-

ly no one would interpret this to mean that the gospel was preached to them after they had died. No, the gospel was preached to them that are now dead.

Note especially the last part of **1 Peter 4:6**, which tells us the reason the gospel was preached to the dead:

For this cause. . . that they might be judged according to men in the flesh. [by the law, which corrects our conduct] but live according to God in the spirit. [by grace, which justifies us and makes us righteous before God]

There is no possible way that this verse could be applied to the dead people in hades. There would be no reason for Christ to preach a sermon to dead people. Even if the dead were conscious and could hear the gospel preached, none of the wicked could repent and be saved, and all of the righteous already had repented at the preaching of the gospel while they were yet alive.

So we see that neither passage teaches that people, while dead, heard an audible sermon from anyone.

**“HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE. . .”
(Eph. 4:8)**

Many churches today teach that there are two compartments in hades — a fiery one where the wicked go at death and a heavenly one (paradise) for the dead believers. According to this theory, at His ascension Christ removed the Old Testament saints out of the paradise compartment in hades and took them to heaven with Him. In support of this theory, **Ephesians 4:8** is often quoted:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

This verse is an obvious reference to the ascension of Christ. However, we must ask ourselves two questions: (1) what were the gifts that He gave to men, and to whom did He give them? (2) what was the captivity that he led captive?

Before we answer these questions, we must first realize that Paul was simply quoting a verse from the Psalms. So let us go back to the original verse and see its context.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. (Ps. 68:18)

Those who teach the “compartment” theory tell us that these gifts were the rewards that the godly men received when they were taken to heaven. But this theory falls flat when we quote the source of Paul's doctrine in Psalm 68:18, because the psalmist includes “the rebellious also.”

We can be sure that “the rebellious also” would not have gone to heaven with the believers. So there must be another answer to our first question: what were the gifts that Christ gave to men? Paul gives us the answer a few verses later:

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:11, 12)

This passage makes it abundantly clear why “the rebellious also” were to receive these gifts. We are all a rebellious people, and for this reason God has given us (as gifts) apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers “for the perfecting of the saints.”

Why does God want the saints perfected? The psalmist said “that the Lord God might dwell among them.” When the Bride has made herself ready (Rev. 19:7), then Christ shall come to earth to dwell with her:

. . . Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Rev. 21:3)

Therefore, to answer our first question, when Christ ascended into heaven, He gave us ministers to perfect the saints.

Our second question was: What does it mean to “lead captivity captive”? Does it mean that Christ led the believers to heaven from paradise? Not at all.

“Lead captivity captive” is an old expression that meant that people had been freed from a captivity. The phrase occurs in **Judges 5:12** in the song that Deborah sang after Barak delivered Israel from the captivity of the Canaanites:

Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song. Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

Barak freed Israel from the Canaanite captivity. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he says that Christ legally freed us from the sentence of death (mortality) that Adam's sin had imposed upon us all. Christians shall experience this freedom (immortality) at the resurrection.

This passage obviously has nothing to do with “compartments” in hades, from which Christ supposedly removed all the believers. The compartment theory originates in the Talmud, the Pharisaic “traditions of men.” It has no basis whatsoever in the Scriptures.

Therefore, when Christ ascended to heaven, He freed us from the curse of the Law, the sentence of death, and He gave us ministers to perfect the saints.



BELIEVERS “NEVER DIE”?
(John 11:25, 26)

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25, 26)

If the above translation were correct, it would contradict itself. In verse 25, Jesus says that believers who have died shall live. But in the next verse, Jesus is made to say that believers “shall never die.”

Let us look at a more literal translation. The Concordant Literal New Testament reads:

Jesus said to her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who is believing in Me, even if he should be dying, shall be living. And everyone who is living and believing in me, should by no means be dying for the eon. Are you believing this?”

In other words, Jesus said that even if believers die before the Kingdom Age (“eon”) comes, they “shall be living” (i.e. be resurrected). And all believers who are alive when that eon comes “should by no means be dying for the eon.”

The verse does not prove that we shall never die. It proves that whether we die before the Kingdom Age comes or live to see it come, all the believers of every age shall live “for the eon.”

At this point, we too ask the reader, “Believest thou this? “

**ABSENT FROM THE BODY —
PRESENT WITH THE LORD**
(2 Cor. 5:8)

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:8)

This verse is familiar to almost all who have been taught the immortality of man, but at the same time it is one of the most misunderstood and misquoted of any verse in the Bible. In order to understand this verse properly, we must see the thrust of Paul's argument in the preceding verses. Let us study this verse in its context, using a literal translation:

For we are aware that, if our terrestrial tabernacle house should be demolished, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eonian, in the heavens.

For in this also we are groaning, longing to be dressed in our habitation which is out of heaven, if so be that, being dressed also, we shall not be found naked.

For we also, who are in the tabernacle, are groaning, being burdened, on which we are not wanting to be stripped, but to be dressed, that the mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Now He Who produces us for this same longing is God, Who is also giving us the earnest of the spirit.

Being, then, courageous always, and aware that, being at home in the body, we are away from home from the Lord,

(For by faith are we walking, not by perception),

We are encouraged, and are delighting rather to be away from home out of the body AND to be at home with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:1;8, C.V.)

Verse one states that there are two tabernacles, or bodies, one heavenly and the other terrestrial (earthly). Verses two and three explain that at the present time we are burdened in our earthly, mortal bodies; but our hope is that some day we shall be “dressed” in the heavenly body, “that the mortal may be swallowed up by life” (vs. 3).

When will this mortal “be swallowed up by life?” The moment we die? No, for Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 15:52-54 that our mortality will not be changed to immortality until “the last trump.” Paul makes it plain that he looked forward to the resurrection, not to the day of his death:

. . . we are not wanting to be stripped [die], but to be dressed. . . [resurrected] (vs. 3)

Did Paul then turn around and say in verse 8 that when he died, he would be “present with the Lord”? Of course not. He simply repeated what he had previously stated: (1) that this mortal body was burdensome, and (2) that he would rather be dressed in his resurrected body AND “be at home with the Lord.”

Notice that even in the King James Version, verse 8 does not read that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” That reading is a deliberate misquotation designed to prove an unscriptural theory.

PAUL'S DILEMMA (Phil. 1:23)

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Phil. 1:23)

Some time ago a well-known minister said that if Phillipians 1:23 was the only verse in Scripture teaching man's immortality, he would believe it, disregarding all the rest of Scripture to the contrary. But we do not believe that the Bible contradicts itself, and we shall show that this passage is no exception.

Notice first that Paul says “to die is gain” (vs. 21). He does not say that to die is heaven, or that to die is to be with the Lord. He says it is gain. Whose gain will it be, Paul's or Christ's?

If the reader will read verses 12-21, it will be clear that Paul was saying that his death would be gain for Christ, not for himself. Paul had been cast into prison, but instead of the other Christians hiding themselves, they were “waxing confident by my bonds” and openly preaching the gospel. Thus, Paul says:

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which hap-

pened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. (Phil. 1: 12)

After spending much time rejoicing over “the furtherance of the gospel,” Paul finally begins to discuss the possibility of his being executed for his faith:

... So now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

For [because] to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:20, 21)

We see, then, that Paul is telling us that the Gospel of Christ would be spread further.. whether he lived or died, and Christ would be magnified. As Tertullian testified in the second century A.D., “The blood of Christians is seed. . .”

In verse 23 the phrase, “I am in a strait betwixt two,” as it reads in most Bibles, is misleading. The Greek verb used is *sunchomai*, a form of the word *sunechoo*, which means “to hold together, to press.” The same word also occurs in Luke 8:45, “the multitude throng thee and press thee.” It occurs again in Acts 7:57, when the Jews “stopped [pressed] their ears.”

Thus, the beginning of Philippians 1:23 should read, “I am being pressed. . .”

In most Bibles the next phrase reads, “betwixt the two.” The Greek word here is *ek*, which all Lexicons and Concordances render “out of.” This is the only verse in the Bible where it has been mistranslated to read “betwixt.”

Thus, the entire phrase should read: “I am being pressed out of the two . . .”

The next word in this verse which we shall discuss is *analousai*, rendered “to

depart.” This word is found only one other time in the Scriptures, where it is rendered “return.”

And [be] ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord, when he shall return [analousai] from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straitway open unto him. (Luke 12:36)

The Companion Bible tells us that this word was used often in the Apocrypha as well, where it frequently was translated “return”. It also states that “to depart” should be translated “for the return.” Thus, the entire verse, translated properly, reads:

Yet I am being pressed out of the two, having the desire for the return and together with Christ to be, for it rather is much better.

Having established the proper translation of the passage, we can now proceed to interpret it from the beginning. Paul was preaching in jail, and the Christians outside were taking courage because of Paul's example. So Paul concludes that Christ would gain glory, whether he (Paul) would be executed or acquitted.

These were the two “choices” that Paul mentioned. If he was executed, Christ would be magnified; if he was acquitted, Christ would be magnified as well. Paul says that he did not know which would be the most gain for Christ, so he decided not to state any preference to the Philippians:

. . . yet what I shall choose I wot not. [literally, “I am not making known”]

So Paul would not state his preference, for he was “being pressed out of” the two choices. In other words, he could not choose either of them. Instead, he intro-

duces a third choice, which was his real desire—"the return" of Christ. This is the hope of the Christian, and it is "much better" than either living or dying.

Even as it is translated in the King James, verse 23 which seems to say if he departed (died) he would be with Christ, can be explained by death as unconsciousness. Paul knew that if he did die, the next conscious moment would be his resurrection at which time he would then be with Christ.

We conclude, then, that Paul did not believe that when he died, he would be with Christ immediately. His hope was the return of Christ, when the dead believers would be raised to inherit the Kingdom.

PAUL'S REWARD — WHEN? (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

This passage is quite similar to Philippians 1:20-23. The word "departure" is in Greek, analysis, from analuo. We have already shown in the previous section that analuo means "return."

Thus Paul said that "the time of my returning is at hand." Where would Paul return? Well, where did Paul come from? If Paul pre-existed in heaven, then obviously, he would return to heaven. But we have already shown that man originated in the dust of the ground and that death is a return to our origin (Gen. 3:19).

Paul's reward was "laid up" for him, and he expected to receive it "at that day."

At what day? The last part of the verse tells us that Paul expected to receive it at the same time the other believers received it, for he says:

. . . and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Furthermore, a look at the context proves that Paul was thinking of the return of Christ, for verse one says:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. (2 Tim. 4:1)

Paul's reward was laid up for him in heaven, but he shall not receive it until Christ returns, for Jesus said:

And behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. (Rev. 22:12)



All of the world's major religions teach that man receives his reward when he "dies." The Bible says that no one, not even Paul, receives any reward until the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

ENOCH: DEAD? OR ALIVE?

(Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5)

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him. (Gen. 5:24)

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Heb. 11:5)

Some say that this passage teaches that Enoch never died, but that God took him directly to heaven. On the other hand, there are other Scriptures which would seem to contradict that view. For example, Jesus said:

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. (John 3:13)

No man hath seen God at any time. (John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12)

How can we reconcile this seeming contradiction?

In Genesis 5:24 the word “took” is from the Hebrew word laquach, which means “to receive, or accept” (Young). The phrase, “he was not” is used in the Bible to denote death (see Jer. 31:15 and Job 7:21). Thus, Genesis 5:24 could be read:

And Enoch walked with God; and he died; for God accepted him.

In Hebrews 11:5 the word “translated” is metatithemi, which means “to place, or transfer in a passive, horizontal posture” (Strong’s). This is the only place in the Bible where this word appears. However, it is also used in the fourth chapter of the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon:

He pleased God, and was beloved of him; so that living among sinners he was translated. (vs. 10)

The context of this verse makes it plain that it is not referring to Enoch, in particular, but rather to the righteous in general in contrast to the wicked.

But though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he [“the righteous”] be in rest. (vs. 7)

He [“the righteous”] pleased God, and was beloved of him; so that living among sinners he [“the righteous”] was translated. (vs. 10)

Yea, speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. (vs. 11)

He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time; (vs. 13)

For his soul pleased the Lord; therefore hasted he [God] to take him away from among the wicked. (vs. 14)

This the people saw, and understood it not, neither laid they up this in their minds, that his grace and mercy is with his saints, and that he hath respect unto his chosen. (vs. 15)

Thus the righteous that is dead shall condemn the ungodly which are living. . . (vs. 16)

For they shall see the end [death] of the wise, and shall not understand what God in his counsel hath decreed of him, and to what end the Lord hath set him in safety. (vs. 17)

All of the above quotes are from The Wisdom of Solomon.

In other words, when the wicked live to be very old and the righteous seem to die young, it is because God is merciful to the righteous. God takes the righteous “away from among the wicked” to spare them from the contaminating influence of the wicked.

Thus, God translates the righteous from this life to the sleep of death.

We see, therefore, that the word “translated” does not mean “taken to heaven” in the Wisdom of Solomon. The word is used in reference to death.

Thus, when this word is used in Hebrews 11:5 in reference to Enoch, it does not necessarily mean he was taken into heaven.

Hebrews 11 also presents us with another seeming contradiction that we must resolve. Verse 5 says that. . .

. . . Enoch was translated that he should not see death.

The chapter goes on to list the famous men of the Old Scriptures, showing their faith:

By faith Abel. . . By faith Enoch. . . By faith Noah . . . By faith Abraham. . . etc.

After listing all these people, including Enoch, the writer concluded in verse 13:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises. . .

And again we read later:

And these all [including Enoch], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for

us, that they [including Enoch] without us should not be made perfect. (Heb. 11:39, 40)

How shall we reconcile this seeming contradiction? Did Enoch “not see death,” or did he die “in faith, not having received the promises”?

The solution is to realize that the statement is that he should not see death, not “that he should not die. “It must mean that God mercifully took Enoch out of this life to spare him the infirmities of old age, or from the hands of the wicked, as the Wisdom of Solomon seems to indicate.

Another possibility is that Enoch did not “see” death, but instead, saw the future life in the Kingdom of God. He knew his next conscious moment would be the resurrection from the dead.

In any case, we must conclude that Enoch did die, that he died in faith, not having received the promises, and that he shall receive the promises at the resurrection of the dead, along with the rest of the overcomers (Heb. 11:40).



**THE “SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR”
(Rev. 6:9-11)**

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

And they cried with a loud voice saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And white robes were given unto everyone of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Those who believe in the immortality of the soul teach that this passage proves that the martyrs are alive in heaven. However, they do not attempt to explain why these souls are said to be “under the altar,” rather than in heaven. Neither can they explain why these souls were told to “rest for a little season.”

This opening of the “fifth seal” is part of a vision that John saw nearly 2,000 years ago. Like the “appearance” of Moses and Elijah on the mount with Jesus, this scene occurred only in a vision.

The symbolic language used here is very similar to that used in the case of Abel. When Cain murdered Abel, God did not say to Cain, “Your brother Abel's soul has come up to heaven and told me that you killed him.” No, God said:

... What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. (Gen. 4:10)

The New Scriptures explain Abel's blood crying from the ground with the words:

... and by it he being dead yet speaketh. (Heb. 11:4)

No doubt one of the martyred souls that John saw under the altar was righteous Abel. But why does Genesis 4: 10 say that his voice cried from the ground, while Revelation 6:9 says that the voices of the martyrs cried from under the altar? Is there a connection between the ground and the altar? We believe there is.

A martyr is one whose life has been sacrificed for his faith in Christ. In fact, any true Christian is one who has presented himself to God as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1) and who is willing to sacrifice his life for his faith.

In the law of sacrifices found in Leviticus 4, the priests were commanded to offer the bullocks upon the altar and. . .

... pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering. . . (Lev. 4:7)

The blood of sacrificed animals was always to be poured under the altar upon the ground. When the people killed animals for food, they too were commanded to pour the blood upon the ground and cover it with dust. Why? Leviticus 17 says that it was because the soul of the animal is in the blood; and the soul of the animal was to be put in the ground as atonement for our souls:

For it is the life [nephesh, “soul”] of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life [“soul”] thereof; therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the

life ["soul"] of all flesh is the blood thereof. . . (Lev. 17:14)

When the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sin of the world, He “poured out his soul [blood] unto death” (Is.53:12). Thus, Christ's soul was made an offering for sin. His soul died, for -that was the penalty for sin, as it is written:

. . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Ez. 18:4)

Thus we see that the blood is the soul of the flesh, and the blood must be poured upon the ground in atonement for our souls. The fact that the soul of the animal was killed and placed in the ground to atone for man's sin proves that man's soul dies and goes into the ground as well.

We conclude then that John did not see saints alive in heaven, but rather a vision of the many saints who “were slain for the word of God” and who were “under the altar” (in the ground), where they shall “rest” (sleep) until all preresurrection events are fulfilled. Then their “rest” (sleep) shall end in the resurrection.



CHRIST'S ADVENT AND PRESENCE (2 Thess. 2:8)

Man's overwhelming desire for immortality is so deeply rooted that even some who believe that the dead sleep in the grave deny that they themselves shall surely die. They claim that Christ has already returned invisibly, that an invisible resurrection occurred at the same time, and that Christians who have “died” (I) since then “go to be with the Lord.”

There are some variations of this doctrine, but most place this “spiritual resurrection” between 1914 and 1917. The general teaching is based upon two Greek terms used in the Scriptures in connection with Christ's return: epiphaneia (“advent”) and parousia (“presence”).

The King James Version renders epiphaneia “appearing” five times and “brightness” once. The Concordant Literal New Testament consistently renders the word “advent.” Epiphaneia is used in connection with Christ's first advent, as shown in 2 Timothy 1:10 —

But is now made manifest by the appearing [advent] of our Saviour Jesus Christ . . .

To avoid confusion we will use the term “advent” for epiphaneia and “presence” for parousia.

Those who teach that Christ came invisibly in 1914 and 1917 believe that the “advent” and the “presence” are two separate events. They identify His presence with His invisible coming and His advent with His future, visible, bodily manifestation.

This doctrine utterly negates the clear, Bible teaching of the bodily resurrection of the dead. They claim that at the presence

of Christ the overcomers were spiritually resurrected, while their bodies remained in the ground, and only at the advent of Christ will they be joined to their physical bodies.

As we have already seen, the spirit is merely the breath of God which returns to God when the person dies. It is not a conscious entity. Soul is merely the effect of the union between body and spirit. When the spirit returns to God and the body returns to the earth, the soul (consciousness) ceases to exist and consequently cannot “be with the Lord” apart from the body at any time. Either the whole man is dead, or the whole man is alive.

In speaking of Christ's presence in 2 Thess. 2:1-3, Paul says:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming [presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

In other words, Christ would not be present on earth until some time after the man of sin is revealed. Furthermore, Christ's presence and the destruction of the man of sin occur at the same time, for we read in verse 8:

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness [advent] of His coming. [presence]

Thus, the man of sin is revealed, and then he is destroyed by the advent of Christ's presence. Obviously, this did not happen in 1914 or 1917 or yet as of the writing of this book.

2 Thess. 2:1 links Christ's presence with “our gathering together unto Him.” Paul makes the same link in his first letter to the Thessalonians, when he says:

. . . we which are alive and remain unto the coming [presence] of the Lord shall not precede [“precede”] them which are asleep. [i.e., dead] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (1 Thess. 4:15, 16)

In other words, when Christ's presence begins, “the dead in Christ” shall be resurrected at the trump of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that this trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:52), or instantaneously. Paul goes on to say in 1 Thess. 4:17 —

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

So we see that at Christ's presence both “the dead in Christ” and “we which are alive” at that time shall meet Christ in the air together. None will have gone to be with the Lord previously. This is born out in one of Paul's previous statements:

To the end that he [God] may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming [presence] of our Lord Jesus

Christ with ALL his saints. (1 Thess. 3:13)

Rotherham's Emphasized Bible shows that the entire last part of the verse is strongly emphatic in the Greek, and that the word “all” is even more emphatic. Thus, the verse should be read to mean that God shall establish our hearts unblameable in holiness at Christ's presence with ALL His saints. We shall not be made holy before that time, and we shall ALL be with Christ at his presence.

That the resurrection and the presence occur simultaneously is further shown in 1 Cor. 15:23, where Paul gives us the order of resurrections: “. . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming [presence].” In other words, “those that are Christ's” shall be resurrected at his presence.

But in another passage Paul also tells us that the resurrection shall occur at Christ's advent:

Looking for that blessed hope, [i.e., the resurrection] and the glorious appearing [advent] of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13)

The great hope of the Christian is the resurrection (Rom. 8:23-25; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4). In 1 Cor. 15:23 Paul states that this resurrection shall occur at Christ's presence. In Titus 2:13 Paul states that this same resurrection shall occur at Christ's advent.

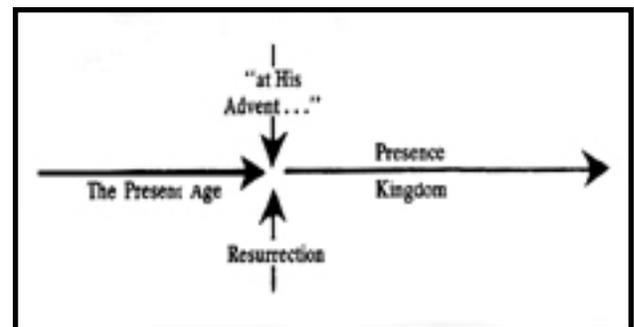
The advent is the occasion of the resurrection and the beginning of the presence of Christ and His Kingdom. The advent is the single event which begins Christ's continuing bodily presence throughout the Kingdom Age.

The advent, the presence, the resurrec-

tion, and the kingdom are all linked together in 2 Timothy 4:1, where Paul says:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing [advent] and His kingdom.

The presence, the resurrection of the dead for judgment, and the kingdom are all synchronized by the phrase, “at His advent.”



Thus, to teach that Jesus' advent is in two stages, one in 1914,1917, or any other past date, and one in the future, is not Scriptural.

Since Jesus has not come in parousia all still die and will sleep in the grave until Jesus comes. To teach that after 1914 or 1917 Christians do not “surely die,” is to teach the serpent's lie in a new form.

The earliest Christian leaders also taught that Christ's “advent” began His “presence” on earth to judge and rule all nations (see: 2 Clement 12:1; 17:4; Hermas Sim. V 5:3; Epistle to Diognetus 7:6).

THE “PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

We have not specifically mentioned the “rapture” in this book because we have another book on it, but a brief comment should be made here since it is taught by many tens of thousands of supposed Christian ministers.

Like the doctrine just discussed, it is based on the error that Jesus' second advent is in two stages. It is also based on the falsehood that the dead do not

really die, but instead go to heaven alive. We do pray the reader has now seen that God's Word utterly exposes the "Pre-Tribulation Rapture" as false doctrine. For a separate study of the "Rapture," read "The Rapture of the Wicked."

OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCES

Many people teach that out-of-the-body experiences (OBE's) are positive proof that the soul continues to exist consciously after death. "Many have suffered physical death," they say, "and have come back and described the 'other side'." However, to cite OBE's as authoritative proof of the soul's immortality is inconsistent and anti-Scriptural.

It is inconsistent, because: (1) of all the people who lose their vital signs and are subsequently brought back to life, only a tiny percentage report having an OBE. Most experience nothing. (2) OBE's are experienced by the living as well as a few of the "clinically dead." (3) The descriptions of the "other side" are usually contradictory, even among professing Christians who reported these experiences.

It is anti-Scriptural, because: (1) It makes subjective, human experience equal to or greater than the Word of God, which teaches that "the dead know not any thing." (2) Christians are not the only people who claim to have gone to heaven in an OBE. Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and even atheists and agnostics who have OBE's usually report that they went to some place of happiness, often being reunited with friends and relatives.

OBE's are an unreliable foundation on which to base a doctrine concerning the state of the dead, because everyone claims to have gone to the place where their religious belief told them they would go. If a person believes that he has fulfilled his

religion's requirements to "go to heaven," his "OBE" brings him to a beautiful paradise. But if he believes (even subconsciously) that he is not good enough to go to heaven, and if others have told him that he will burn in hell if he does not conform to certain rituals, then his "OBE" is likely to place him in a burning hell.

Regardless of race or creed, those who have no concept of a burning hell never experience OBE's which place them there. And those who were never taught of heavenly rewards after death never have OBE's of that nature either. In other words, OBE's are totally dependent upon men's beliefs, rather than what is the truth about the state of the dead.

Many of us have heard testimonies of people who claimed to have died, gone to either "heaven" or "hell," and then returned to tell of it. These people seldom realize that they are claiming to have been resurrected from the dead. If they truly died and really did go to where they say other dead people are, then their return can only be defined as a resurrection from the dead.

But think of the implications of this claim. Can people truly die, go to heaven for a season, and then return to their bodies here on earth, thereby being resurrected before the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5, 6)? Again, can people truly die, go to a burning hell for a season, and then return in a resurrection from hell?!? God forbid! If dead Hindus and Muslims can be resurrected from heaven in the same manner as is claimed of Christians, then Krishna, Mohammed, and Jesus all must be the way, the truth, and the life! But the Bible teaches no such thing.

The Bible records many resurrections from the dead: 1 Kings 17:22; Matt. 9:25; 27:53; 28:7; Luke 7:15; John 11:44; Acts

9:40; 20:12. These passages afforded excellent opportunities to record divinely-inspired descriptions of the .. other side. “ But the Word of God makes no mention of any OBE's.

Therefore, we suggest that those who have what they call OBE's did not really die at all, although they may have lost their vital signs, and they may have been pronounced “clinically dead.” There have been cases where a person on a life-support system was pronounced clinically dead by qualified specialists. They were taken off the life-support system and shortly thereafter revived. Thus, the pronouncement of “clinical death” was shown to be inaccurate. If the person claimed to have an OBE, it was probably just a hallucination or dream.

It is well known that going to sleep shortly after eating a heavy meal will cause one to dream. If one's stomach is full of pizza, other spicy foods, or cold ice cream, his dreams may be weird, even to the point of being called “nightmares.” Likewise, people who are at the point of death, especially in hospitals, are subjected to large doses of stimulant drugs which produce vivid dreams or hallucinations.

Many who have had OBE's tell of meeting a “being of light,” which they claim was the god of their particular religion. Christians who had OBE's claim he was Jesus Christ, Hindus call him Khrishna, and others have different names for him. Famous OBE researchers like Robert Moore and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross claim to have OBE's at will, and while having them, they communicate regularly with “beings of light.”

Tal Brooke, who worked with Robert Moore at the University of Virginia, described Moore's research methods this way:

. . . he would get into an OBE state at night, and he would talk with various “beings of light” which tutored him on the technology of eliciting OBE's in other people. . . His breakthrough may be in the area of using technology to produce mediumship . . . (Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal, April, 1977, p. 7).

The Bible says that the adversary “is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). God's Law specifically forbids mediumship and contact with evil spirits:

Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them; I am the Lord your God. (Lev. 19: 31)

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. (Lev. 20:6)

Robert Moore claims that while he was having an OBE, he received knowledge from various “beings of light.” We know that this knowledge is not of God, for the doctrines taught are anti-Scriptural. Paul spoke of those who refused to believe and obey God:

. . . Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. (2 Thess. 2:10, 11)

No doubt Paul recalled God's dealings with the false prophets in the days of King Ahab, who also refused the truth:

Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy (Ahab's) prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee. (2 Chron. 18:22)

Paul also warned the Galatians:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8)

As the reader must realize by now; anyone who teaches that the dead do not surely die, but instead remain alive although in some other place and in some other form, are preaching another gospel. not the true gospel of Jesus Christ. They should be avoided, not encouraged in their error.

THE SILVER CORD (Eccl. 12:6)

We'll cite one last reference, one which some quote, not realizing their "interpretation" of it is the same as that of the followers of the occult religions. That is **Ecclesiastes 12:6:**

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.

Occultists claim that the silver cord attaches man's "conscious spirit" to his body, and its breaking refers to the separation of the spirit from the body. They claim they can leave their bodies and return as long as they do not break the silver cord. They instruct novices to leave their bodies only a short distance at first, until, with practice, they can s-t-r-e-t-c-h the silver cord great distances without breaking it. Novices are warned if they break the cord, their "spirits" will not be able to return to their bodies. This doctrine is taught by anti-Christian, occult theologians.

Christians who have unknowingly accepted the occultist interpretation of the

silver cord should be told that the entire twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes uses metaphoric language, and verse 6 is no exception. The symbolic meaning is revealed by a study of the customs prevalent during the days of Solomon. Ancient lamps were simple bowls of oil with a wick and were often suspended by a cord. In his Commentary on this verse, Jamieson writes:

A lamp of frail material, but gilded over, often in the East hung from roofs by a cord of silk and silver interwoven; as the lamp is dashed down and broken, when the cord breaks, so man at death; the golden bowl of the lamp answers to the skull, which, from the vital preciousness of its contents may be called "golden;" "the silver cord" is the spinal marrow, which is white and precious as silver, and is attached to the brain.

The Companion Bible says:

*The silver cord: i.e. the spinal cord.
The golden bowl: i.e. the head, or skull.*

The Anchor Bible says of this verse:

Figures of death: the ornamental lamp is extinguished when its cord is cut, and its bowl falls and is broken. . .

We see, then, that Solomon was comparing death to the breaking of the silver cord that suspended the lamp from the ceiling. Any time that a lamp cord broke, the lamp would smash on the floor, and the light would go out. Solomon likened death to this. This imagery coincides perfectly with his own definition of death elsewhere: "The dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 9:5).

That the whole of chapter 12 talks of man's aging and final death is made clear in verse 5, where he says:

And desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.

Man's long home is his tomb, and in Solomon's time the people mourned, because they knew the man was dead and in his tomb, not alive in some celestial home.

They knew, as Solomon wrote in a previous chapter: "For the living know that they shall die" (Eccl. 9:5).

As you know, and probably have known all of your adult life deep down in your heart, death is an enemy, not a friend which transports the dead to a better life. In spite of what ministers often say at funerals, death is a tragedy, and the time is one of sorrow. The people know this instinctively today, as they did in Solomon's day. Our comfort and our hope is in the resurrection from the dead.

SECTION THREE: THE TRAGIC RESULTS OF UN-SCRIPTURAL TEACHING

Since it is common knowledge that all men fear pain and death, unscrupulous men have always used that fear in other men in order to gain some advantage from them.

The best known example of such use of that fear of pain and death is when a common thug threatens to hurt a person unless that person gives to the thug something of value. If the thug is in a position to carry out the threat, or if he goes so far as to inflict the pain, so that the fear of death is aroused in the victim, the victim usually does what the thug tells him to do. Unscrupulous men long ago discovered that men seem instinctively to know that death has something to do with a god or

gods. These wicked men then told others that they (the unscrupulous ones) had a special relationship to that god or gods, and if the people would follow their instructions, pain and death could be alleviated, postponed, or, in the case of death, possibly even kept away.

In some cases elaborate rituals and doctrines were promulgated by the wicked ones, all designed to confuse other men about pain and death, and to convince them they must follow the inventor of the rituals and obey him in order to avoid the pain and death.

In their more foolish forms among primitive people, we call the men who control others in this manner "witch doctors." In more sophisticated societies or "civilizations," not recognizing the parallel with the witch doctor, we call them "priests" or "ministers."

Since intelligent men soon realized that the "priest" was unable to prevent death, the priests had to invent some more effective doctrine about death, in order to maintain their "fear-control" over intelligent people. That doctrine was that man was "immortal" and really would never die.

In order to understand why ancient priests taught the doctrine of the "immortal soul," i.e. that men live on in a conscious state after their physical body dies, we must also understand that they knew that men really fear great pain MORE than they fear actual death.

The ancient priests, seeing that men in great pain from disease, wounds, or torture would often beg to be put to death so that the pain would end, realized that the threat of pain AFTER death could be a greater control force than the threat of death itself. Thus was born the teaching

that those who did not obey the priest would be taken, still “alive” to a place of pain and torture AFTER their body died.

To it, of course, was added “heaven” or “paradise,” where those who DID obey the priests would go in a conscious state to enjoy happiness and bliss far beyond what they had had on earth. One might call this “the carrot and the stick” of false religion. This threat of unending torture AFTER death was far more frightening to people than any threat of pain in this life, and these doctrines were soon taught by all who wished to control other people, regardless of what “god” or “gods” they professed to serve.

Only one Religion—that which the one True God revealed to Adam and Eve in Eden, and which was later given in written form to Israel at Mt. Sinai—taught the Truth that “thou shalt surely die,” and that “the wages of sin (disobedience to God's Law) is death (cessation of life),” and that man's only hope was that some time in the future, God would resurrect the dead to eternal life.

Jesus Christ came, and by His teachings and His death and Resurrection, He confirmed the Truth of the one True Religion, the Truth which Jesus said would set men free.

But wicked men keep men in bondage with the threat of pain and torture after death. By infiltrating and finally seizing control of the early Christian Church, they raised a priesthood in what they called “The Holy Catholic Church.”

Using the fear of pain AFTER death in “hell” and “purgatory,” they eventually brought the whole continent of Europe into bondage to their “priests.” The Protestant Reformation broke that yoke of bondage by the Truth, but now, several hundred years later, almost the whole of

the so-called “Protestant” movement again teaches the falsehoods taught by the Roman Church and the priests of ancient Babylon, and millions of God's people are again under bondage for fear of pain and death.

In order to prevent the people from learning the Truth of sin and death, the modern priesthood, like the ancients, also denies God's Law. Now they teach that it was once in effect but that Jesus “put it away.” If the people were to read and study God's Law they would soon discover the true penalty for sin is simply death, i.e. cessation of life. This true penalty is merciful, not vengeful, and leaves no room for a false doctrine that men who do not follow the priest's rituals will be tortured after death. By casting aside God's Law the modern “priests” also prevent the people from following the divine instructions which would bring them a better life now. Unknowingly, they disobey the divine precepts on agriculture and food, on marriage, on economics, on race, on foreign relations, and in many other areas. Thus, individually and nationally they are sick in mind and body. Their troubles then give the priests the opportunity to be their guides and instructors to lead them further into bondage.

Another tragic consequence of these false doctrines is that they drive many intelligent people away from the Bible and true Christianity. They see the injustice of eternal torture for the sins of one short lifetime, but thinking the Bible really teaches that—because so many professing “Bible ministers” say it does—they reject both the Bible and the God who gave it. Some begin a search for a more “just” God and are recruited into eastern religions or Spiritualism and never do find the Bible Truth that would set them free and convince them that the God of the Bible is both True and Just.

The false doctrine of the conscious existence of the dead is largely responsible for the average Christian's "I-don't-care" attitude toward our present national and political problems. Since they are convinced their eternal abode is in heaven, they sit and do nothing, while the earth and its peoples are captured by unrighteous men and oppressive governments.

As things grow progressively worse, the false ministers continue to spread their hymn book theology:

This world is not my home;
I'm only passing by;
My heaven and my hope
Is all up in the sky.

As long as people believe the false doctrines that the wages of sin is an eternity of pain and torture and that the reward of obeying the priest is an eternity of bliss in heaven, just so long will they continue to despise God's material creation and do nothing to build God's earthly kingdom.

May God anoint the eyes of His people, and may the Truth of His Holy Word set us free, that we might "come out from among them" (false churches) and begin to prepare Christ's Kingdom for the day He returns to resurrect His saints to rule with Him here on the earth. Amen.

Thou Shalt Surely Die



by
**G. Marsh Hilbourne
and Micheal T. Wark**