

The Dead Really Die!
(Prepared by Andrew Manthe)

Two Popular Views of Death (Regarding Those Who are Saved)

Some Christians

Body returns to dust

Spirit (breath) returns to God

Next conscious thought – you're with God

In death, the spirit is non-functioning & Inactive

Many Christians

Body returns to dust

Soul (spirit essence) returns to God

Next conscious thought – you're with God

In death, the spirit is conscious, active & intelligent

Introduction (All Scriptures quoted in this paper are from the **King James Bible**.)

Both the first promise and the first lie recorded in the Bible have to do with **death**.

The first (conditional) promise: **Genesis 2:17**, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Death was promised to the disobedient. (In Hebrew, the text actually ends with these words: "...**dying**, ye shall surely die." Thus the text essentially states that once Adam sinned, he would immediately begin the **process of dying**, even though he would not physically die for probably around 929 more years. (See **Genesis 5:5**.)

The first lie: **Genesis 3:2-4**, "And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." The serpent (the **devil** is called that "old serpent" in **Revelation 12:9** and **20:2**) contradicted God saying that Eve would not actually die for committing disobedience. Today this lie is effectively preached from many church pulpits by pastors who say that when you die, you continue to live (not die) in either heaven or hell.

1 Samuel 28:9-15, "And the woman [a witch] said unto him [King Saul], Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off [killed] those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10 And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. 11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. 13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. 15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

This is an account of a séance where Saul was deceived by an evil spirit masquerading as Samuel who had previously died and was presumably brought into Saul's presence by a witch! (Now think for a moment, could a **witch** have the power and authority to call down from heaven a saved person. That is, would God have to obey a witch and presumably send an individual to earth? The obvious answer is **NO!** Thus Saul only imagined (perceived) that the man (actually an evil spirit) the witch "brought up" was Samuel.

Consider **2 Corinthians 11:14**: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." If Satan can appear as a heavenly angel, could not his angels impersonate humans? As we will discover, a correct (biblical) view of death offers protection to God's people from being thus deceived by the devil.

How was Man Originally Formed?

Genesis 2:7 reads, "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." A complete "soul" is comprised of a body (dust) and God's breath of life.

1 Corinthians 15:45 reiterates this account as it reads, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Notice that Adam became a living soul. The verse does say he was given an immortal soul.

What happens at death?

Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 states, "Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 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. 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Verses 5 & 6 above use poetic language to describe death. Then verse 7 explains how death is the **reversal** of the original creation: the body returns to dust and the spirit of God returns to Him. The key point to understand here is that the above description applies to both the saved and the unsaved. Thus if one believes that the righteous receive their reward at death – that is, going to heaven in a conscious state to be with God – **then** the unsaved also go to "be with the Lord" since everyone's spirit returns to God at death. (God just lends people the spirit of life. Then He takes it back again, when individuals die, whether they are redeemed or lost.)

James 2:26 verifies that "...the body without the spirit is dead..." **Luke 24:39** states, "...a spirit hath not flesh and bones..."

A person can be likened to a **box**. Let's say the boards represent a person's body while the nails stand for the "spirit essence." If a carpenter removes the nails from the boards, you no longer have a box. Likewise, when a person dies, his body eventually returns to dust and his spirit returns to God. Thus the individual's personhood ceases to exist until, at the resurrection, the Lord combines the individual's (God's) spirit with a new body that the redeemed person will enjoy throughout eternity.

So now the most important question is this: **“What are the characteristics or features of the spirit once it returns to God?”** Is it a “being” or “entity” that can think, act, praise, and perceive events occurring in both heaven and on earth? Let’s see.

False View of Death Believed by Many Christians

Many believe that at death (for the righteous), the conscious, living “soul” leaves the body and returns to God. They suppose that the departed can think, praise God, exhibit advanced knowledge, participate in activity, and view both heavenly and earthly events.

Modern “Appearances” of the Dead?

This author, many years ago, gave Bible studies to twelve individuals in Crestline, CA. Over time, ALL the individuals shared that at some time they believed they had experienced some form of visitation from the dead (e.g., sensing a presence, seeing a ghostly figure, hearing a voice or a “being” moving).

Missionary story: Some years ago, a missionary couple lost both daughters in a tragic accident. A few days after the funeral, the husband and wife were having worship when suddenly their two daughters “appeared” in the room. The Father immediately began to quote Scripture and commanded, in the name of Jesus, that the evil spirits leave. The wife immediately dropped to her knees and began praying. The spirits departed, but only after they briefly revealed their true, hideous (demonic) faces.

There are many apparitions of Mary (Jesus’ Mother) reported from around the world. A proper understanding of death will protect people from believing or even considering the messages borne by the devil’s angel that masquerades as “Mary.”

Basic Scriptures that Specify that Death is Characterized by Unconscious-Inactivity

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6: “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”

The dead lose their capacity to think or experience emotions, or participate in earthly events.

Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Both physical and mental abilities cease once you die.

Psalms 6:5: “For in death there is no remembrance of thee [God]: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”

Death results in complete memory loss. How could we “forget God” if we, at death, were ushered into His very presence?

Psalms 115:17: “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.”

The state of death is characterized by complete quietness. If the righteous went to heaven immediately at death, in a living state, wouldn’t they be fully engaged in praising God?

Psalms 146:1-4: “Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2 While I live will I praise the

LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. 3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

Our ability to think ceases at the moment of death. We are admonished to praise God while we live, before we die, because we can't praise God after death.

Isaiah 38:18-19: “For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.”

We are admonished to praise the Lord now, while you are living, because we can't praise God in death (for we will not be alive).

1 Corinthians 15:22-23: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”

We do not live again until Christ's second coming, which simultaneously occurs with the resurrection. We are not alive (conscious) during the time we are dead.

Job 7:9-10: “As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. 10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”

The dead do not return to **haunt** their earthly house.

The eight previous passages all proclaim that while dead, people are not alive, conscious, thinking, or active.

Death is Likened to Sleep (not Conscious Interaction with God)

John 11:11-14: “These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

The experience of death is equated with “being asleep” (unconscious of what is going on around us).

Acts 7:58-60: “And cast him [Stephen] out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Stephen was stoned to death which was equated with being “asleep.” Now “falling asleep” is certainly not an accurate description of death, if at death a saved person is both conscious and interacting with God and the angels in heaven.

Job 14:7-12: “For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; 9 Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. 10 But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: 12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.”

Mankind dies and is no more. He is not raised from sleep till the heavens be no more (occurs at or after Christ's second coming). (See **2 Peter 3:12-13**.)

Daniel 12:1-2: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Both the saved and the wicked "sleep in the dust" during death. They will both need to be awakened. Why would a person need to be awakened from death if he/she was conscious while dead?

John 5:25, 28-29: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live...28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

At the resurrection the saved will hear Christ's voice. They don't hear Christ's voice during death.

Mankind is Called "Mortal" (Subject to Death) While the Lord is Exclusively Described as "Immortal"

1 Corinthians 15:51-54: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

We don't receive immortality until the great resurrection (at the last trump).

Job 4:17: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" We are mortal, not immortal!

Romans 6:12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

1 Timothy 6:15-16: "Which in his [Jesus] times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

Only the Godhead currently has immortality!

1 Timothy 1:16-17: "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And Why is Mankind Mortal?

Genesis 3:22-24: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from

whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

These verses showcase an example that demonstrates that for man to live forever, he needs to stay connected to a source of life. When God removed Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, He effectively put them on a course that would lead to sure death. Thus, the wicked cannot expect to live in an eternity of hell or any other place because they will be separated from the life force only God can provide and sustain.

Indeed **Psalms 36:7-9** states, “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”

Our access to the fountain of life comes only when we have spiritual connection with God.

Acts 17:24-25. 28 reinforces that: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things...28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being.”

Additional Texts that Strongly Imply the Righteous Dead are Really Dead Until Jesus Returns

John 13:33-38; 14:1-7: “Little children [Jesus’ disciples], yet a little while I [Jesus] am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. 34 A **new commandment** I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. 36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. 37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. 38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.”

Continuing...John 14:1: Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions [Literally: places to reside]: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”

Jesus is the only way to our Heavenly Father. Jesus is the lone source of truth and life.

Note: The above passage also provides important information regarding the **state of the dead**. In **John 14:1** Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled.” The critical questions are, to whom is Jesus speaking, and what was troubling him/her or them? The “who” [Jesus’ disciples] is stated in **John 13:22**. More specifically, the speaker for the disciples was Peter (**John 13:36**). Also in verse 36, Peter asks where Jesus is going. Jesus answers with a depressing statement: “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now.” Then in **John 13:37** Peter expresses his desire to follow or stay with Jesus. Next in **John 14:1-3** Jesus responds by detailing what must occur before Peter

will be reunited with his Lord. The sequence includes Jesus returning to heaven, preparing a place for Peter (and the other disciples, and all of the redeemed), and then returning to earth (the Second Coming) to gather up His own. Now if the saved, when they die, go directly to heaven in a conscious state, then **John 14:1-3** would indicate that the disciples would be with the Lord immediately after they each individually died. Yet nothing of this sort is mentioned in the above verses.

Matthew 22:24-28: “Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.”

Note: Why would the brothers anticipate that they would wait until the resurrection to determine which brother would “get the wife” throughout eternity? If after death we retain our full faculties, then the issue of “whose wife she should be” would become relevant as soon as the woman died and went to heaven.

2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I [Paul] have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 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.” Why would Paul have to wait till the second coming of Christ (His appearing) to receive his crown if he went, as a conscious being, to Christ right after his death?

1 Peter 5:4: Peter exhorts the elders to feed the flock (**1 Peter 5:1-3**), and verse four states, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” Again, why would these faithful elders need to wait till Jesus comes again to earth to receive their crowns of victory if they, at death, were fully functional with Christ in heaven?

Matthew 16:27: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and **then** he shall reward every man according to his works.” If the righteous dead go to live and reign with Christ at death, then they would, to a large degree, have already received their reward. But this Scripture declares to us that Jesus does not give out rewards **until** His second coming!

Romans 2:7: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:” If we already have immortal souls, we wouldn’t need to seek for immortality (eternal life).

Explanations for Texts that Seem to Say the Righteous Dead are Now Alive with Christ in Heaven

2 Corinthians 5:8: “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

The question to be asked is what word or phrase in this text specifically tells us **when** Paul would be present with the Lord.” Do you find any of the following words, or their synonyms, in the text?: 1) immediately, 2) imminently, 3) instantly, 4) very soon, 5) in short order. No, we do not find any of these words in the verse! We gain insight by examining the original Greek. The secret is to look at the timing issues connected with the words “to be.” These words come attached with these

parts of speech: “aorist infinitive active.” The significance of this designation is that these words do not specify the timing of the action that they are connected to. Thus to accurately capture the Greek meaning, the above text could be written as, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be [at some time in the future] present with the Lord.” So **2 Corinthians 5:8** tells us nothing about WHEN Paul would “be with the Lord,” that is as a thinking, active being. We have to examine other verses in the Bible to discover the condition of man during death.

But just as important as the meaning of words in Greek, we must examine the context (surrounding verses) to gain insight for truly understanding **2 Corinthians 5:8**. Verses one to four, in **2 Corinthians 5**, provide vital information: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

Paul here uses the terms “earthly house” and “tabernacle” to represent our earthly bodies. (Also see **2 Peter 1:13-15** where Peter uses the word “tabernacle” to represent his mortal body. Even devils refer to the human body as a “house” in **Luke 11:24-26**.) Paul looks forward to the time when we will receive our spiritual bodies. And when do we receive our spiritual bodies? The answer is found in **1 Corinthians 15:35, 41-44**: “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?... **41** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. **42** So also is the resurrection of the dead. **43** It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: **44** it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body...”

So we don't get our spiritual bodies until the resurrection.

Now if we go just two verses past our key text (**2 Corinthians 5:8**), we read in **2 Corinthians 5:10**, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Think of what we have just discovered. The verses (context) on both sides of **2 Cor. 5:8** speak about events connected with and following the resurrection when Christ returns to gather His own. So that's when we receive new bodies and God's millennial judgment begins.

Thus the context demands that “to be present with the Lord” refers to the time of the resurrection (Christ's second coming) when the saved receive new bodies and are finally privileged to physically abide in God's presence.

Now here's another important point. Most people inaccurately quote **2 Corinthians 5:8** by saying, “...to be absent from the body **IS** to be present with the Lord.” If the word “is” was indeed included in this location in this verse, then the Bible would here effectively state that once a righteous person dies, he immediately ascends to be with Christ.

But instead of “is,” the operative word used in this passage is “and.” This verse simply lists two things that Paul would eventually experience with no clue given as to the timing of when they

would occur in relationship with each other. "And" does not express the thought that "being absent from the body" requires that Paul would immediately be "present with the Lord."

Philippians 1:23: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, **and to be with Christ**; which is far better." The meaning for the above verse is similar as just described for **2 Corinthians 5:8**. The key is to look at the Greek timing issue connected with the words "to be." In this case, the Greek parts of speech connected to the Greek word translated "to be" are "present infinitive active." Again this designation gives no clue as to the timing of the corresponding event. Thus, to accurately capture the meaning in Greek, the text could be written, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be [at some time in the future] with Christ; which is far better."

Once more, we have to examine other verses in the Bible to discover the actual condition of man during death. And just like **2 Corinthians 5:8** above (see explanation), the operative word in this verse is "and," not "is." Thus "to depart" is not inherently linked to immediately "be(ing) with Christ."

John 8:51: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." The key word in the above text is "see." Without the help of a Greek lexicon the reader might, in his mind, substitute the word "experience" for "see." But the unique meaning of the Greek word translated "see" in this context is "to give special regard to." Thus the above text is really saying that the saved person, anticipating the resurrection and an eternity with God, will give little thought to the temporary rest of death. Death will not occupy a prominent place on his or her radar.

John 11:26: "And whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" See the word studies below. "Shall never die" means "**shall not die forever**" (that is, the death the Christian dies is temporary, not eternal).

Word Studies for the Above Verse

---[shall never die] = ou mee apothanee eis ton aioona. Strong double negative ou mee with second aorist active subjunctive of apothneeskoo again "**shall not die for ever**" (not eternal death). From Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament.

---[shall never die] or, shall **not die forever**. Though he die a temporal death, he shall not continue under its power forever; but shall have a resurrection to life eternal. From Adam Clarke's Commentary.

---[shall never die] Greek: "Shall by no means die **forever**." From Barnes' Notes.

Another answer for the above passages: 1 Corinthians 15:50-54: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

We have to wait till the second coming of Christ before we become immortal in body and spirit.

What About the Thief on the Cross?

Luke 23:39-43: “And one of the malefactors [wrong doer, here “thieves”] which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Verse 43 (the last sentence above) is commonly understood to prove that Jesus promised the repentant thief that he would, that very day, be with Christ in heaven. But to understand the above passage we must remember that the original Greek did NOT include punctuation. Commas and other grammar elements were added many centuries later without direct inspiration from God. Thus, we should never determine our theology on textual meaning based primarily on the use of punctuation.

Verse 43 reads, “...Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” The position of the comma after “thee” makes Christ’s statement imply that the thief would, that very day, be with Jesus in heaven. But if we move the comma AFTER the word “Today” the statement would read, “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise. With this rendering the word “today” serves as an **assurance** from Jesus to the thief that SOMEDAY, in the future, the thief would indeed be with the Lord in heaven.

Greek sentence structure allows for the comma, in the English translation, to be in either position. So we can’t really base our thinking, regarding when the righteous are/will be united with Christ in heaven, on the sentence we have just examined. But there is some often-overlooked, vital information related to this topic found in the request made by the thief.

He implored (**Luke 23:42**), “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Notice that the thief did NOT ask to be with the Lord that day when Christ would **die**. Instead the thief desired to unite with the Lord at the time when Jesus would receive His **kingdom**. The thief did not expect to reside with his Lord in the immediate future. With this context in mind, let us review some Scriptures that specify when Jesus actually receives His kingdom:

- 1) **Daniel 7:13-14:** “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Notice that Jesus (the Son of man) does not receive His kingdom until ALL nations serve Him. All nations do not serve Jesus now. This is a future event connected with the second coming as intimated by the phrase “Son of man came with the clouds [angels] of heaven.” **Daniel 2:44** reiterates this concept as it presents the kingdom of God appearing after all earthly kingdoms are destroyed. The passage reads, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” **Verses 37 – 43** in that same chapter detail the previous earthly kingdoms that will be destroyed by God’s kingdom.

2) **Luke 21:27-31**: “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. 29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. “

Again, we see that it is not until Christ's second coming that He receives His kingdom.

3) **Matthew 25:31-34**: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: 33 and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The righteous (including the repentant thief on the cross) do not inherit the kingdom until the second coming of Christ.

4) **Revelation 11:15-18**: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.”

Note that the Lord's kingdom materializes at the same time when all earthly kingdoms are no more AND when the great judgment commences AND when the prophets (God's special servants) finally receive their reward = at the second coming of Christ.

5) **2 Timothy 4:1**: “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.”

Compare this passage with the previous passage. Jesus does not receive His kingdom until His second coming!

As we review and compare the above Scriptures, we find that Jesus does not acquire His kingdom until He returns to earth to take home His redeemed ones and dispense judgment on the lost (wicked). Thus, the thief on the cross did not anticipate he would be with Christ in heaven until the second coming.

There is a verse in **John 20:17** that confirms that Jesus did not go to heaven on the day that He died. The text reads, “Jesus saith unto her [Mary], Touch [fasten or cling to] me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” You will need to read verses one through sixteen to understand that the context for the above verse indicates that Jesus was speaking on the day (Sunday) when He rose after His crucifixion.

Note: **Luke 23:46** records these words while Jesus was still on the cross, “...Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” But Jesus words, recorded in

John 20:17 (above), inform us that the mere return of man's spirit to God, at death, does NOT constitute "being with the Lord." **John 20:17** assures us that we are only considered "with the Lord" when we ascend to His throne as a complete person (body and spirit).

Study Conclusion

The common death we all experience in this present world is characterized by silence and absence of activity, thought, memory, understanding, and the ability to speak (praise). Everyone who dies must wait till the great resurrection to become alive again. The take-home message from this Bible study is that God wants to PROTECT you from receiving false messages from those who appear to return from the dead claiming to bring new truth from God, which actually is falsehood from the devil.

Now, as a supplement, we will study the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. As we review this parable, keep in mind the two following examples of biblical language that contain elements we know to be allegoric (not to be taken literally) or untrue:

Judges 9:8-15: Trees talk to each other and elect a king over themselves.

Genesis 4:8-11: Cain kills Abel and God says to Cain, "The voice of my brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

The Rich Man & Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And **in hell** [Hades] **he lift up his eyes**, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for **I am tormented in this flame**. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

If we take every detail of the above parable as a literal description of the state of the dead for the both the righteous and the wicked, we will encounter a host of inconsistencies with the rest of the Bible. Also, we will contend with some simply **ridiculous assertions**.

Ridiculous or Unlikely/Awkward Elements

- 1) In **verses 22-25** above, the rich man is taken to hell where he experiences fiery torment. Yet, he freely converses with "Abraham." Now imagine a living person engulfed in flames. (Also consider all the smoke that would fill the air from all the lost people who would also be burning.) What sounds would come from the lips of such an individual? The answer is obvious: screaming, shrieks of pain, gasping, and probably cursing. The burning person would surely not engage in normal dialogue with a being from heaven or anywhere else.
- 2) In **verse 24**, the tormented rich man requests Father Abraham to direct Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to then cool the rich man's tongue. Again, how ridiculous! If I was burning in fire, I would ask for a filled swimming pool to jump into. A single drop of water would not help a bit. Also, while Lazarus was traveling from "Abraham's bosom" (verse 22) to the rich man, the drop of water would certainly have evaporated. And even if Lazarus flew at the speed of light to the rich man, it would do no good because then the drop of water would immediately blow off into space.
- 3) In **verse 26**, the distance between Abraham's bosom and hell is described as a great gulf (think of the distance between opposite sides of the Grand Canyon in Arizona). But yet the rich man can easily project his voice to the hearing of Abraham. How could this be? Are the wicked "dead" given the benefit of greatly amplified voices?
- 4) Here's a horrifying thought! If the saved (in Abraham's bosom) and the lost (in hell) can readily see and hear each other, then the redeemed would view and hear their lost ones writhing in torment for however long hell would exist. What joy could heaven possibly afford under such gruesome conditions?
- 5) Abraham's bosom: what is this? There is no other reference to such in all Scripture except when Sarai gave Hagar, for child-bearing purposes, to Abram for a wife. And later Sarai, with regret, stated to Abram, "I have given my maid unto thy bosom."

Here's the complete passage as recorded in **Genesis 16:5-6**: "And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. 6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face."

So throughout the rest of the Bible, Abraham's bosom is not associated with heaven. Instead, it is once connected with lack of trust in the promise of God. (God had assured Abraham he would have the promised son through his wife, Sarah, not by a female servant. See **Genesis 17:15-16.**)

- 6) If the righteous dead (Lazarus, in this parable) go immediately to Abraham's bosom at death, where did the saved dead go before Abraham died? (Abraham died over 2,100 years after the earth was first populated by Adam and Eve.)

Parable Elements that Directly Contradict the Rest of Scripture

- 1) In the above parable, both **the righteous and the wicked receive their eternal (presumably) rewards immediately after they die.** But **Revelation 22:12** tells us, "And, behold, I [the Lord

God, see verse 6] come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” The Lord gives out His rewards when He returns to earth, not before, not at the time of death for any given individual.

Job 21:29-32 explains when the wicked will be punished. It states, “Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, 30 That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. 31 Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? 32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.”

Please note that the wicked do not each go to a burning hell at death. They are all reserved till the great judgment day to receive their punishment, all at the same time. Likewise, the just do not receive their eternal reward till after Jesus returns at His second coming. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** assures us: “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: 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.”

Indeed we are not “with the Lord” until He comes to get us at His second coming. This fact is reinforced in **John 14:1-3** which declares, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions [Greek meaning is “places to reside”]: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Just think, why would the saved look forward to their own resurrection if at death they went to a “heavenly place” as a conscious spirit? It’s quite clear, the righteous do not go to be with the Lord at death. Instead, Jesus must come down from heaven to receive them and take them to heaven, but only AFTER He has made a place for them to reside. (It’s a basic hospitality issue.)

- 2) In the parable we have been discussing, both the rich man and Lazarus **retain their bodies** when they go to either Abraham’s bosom (“heaven”) or hell. (**Luke 16:23, 24** shares that the rich man had eyes and a tongue, and Lazarus had a finger.) But the Bible repeatedly emphasizes that in death, the bodies of both the saved and the lost return to the dust from which mankind was originally formed.

In **Genesis 3:19**, God tells Adam, “In the sweat of thy face 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.”

Ecclesiastes 12, verses 5 and 6, describe death in poetic terms. Then in verse 7 we read, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” The chapter makes no distinction between the condition in death for the just versus the lost. Their bodies all return to dust and their spirit essence returns to God from which it came.

Job 34:14-15 confirms, “If he [God] set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; 15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.” Again, the experience of all men (both righteous and wicked) is the same during death (until the resurrection). The spirit essence returns to God and the body decomposes into dust.

It may be interesting and even shocking to learn that sea creatures (see **Psalms 104:25-28** for context), when they die, experience the exact same fate as mankind. **Psalms 104:29** states, “Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they **die**, and return to their dust.”

- 3) In the parable, the lost **rich man is active** (both burning in pain and talking to Abraham) and righteous **Lazarus has the potential to bring water**, with his finger, to the rich man to ease his pain. But again the supposition is at direct odds with the rest of Scripture. The Bible likens the experience of death, for both the saved and the lost, to sleep, rest, and non-activity.

Job 14:10-12: declares, “But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: 12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.” Death is equated with sleep, as if the person was no more (non-existent).

Again **Job 3:11-16** speaks about death. Then in **verse 17**, we specifically read about the condition of death for the **unrighteous**. The verse reads, “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.” This verse reinforces that the account of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable whose details should not serve as the basis for understanding the state of the dead.

Psalms 13:3 focuses on the request of righteous David who said, “Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

Finally, **Psalms 31:17** focuses on the lost as it states, “Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.”

So the pattern of Scripture assures us that death is characterized by sleep. This is in direct conflict with the parable where no one ever sleeps!

- 4) The story of the rich man and Lazarus presents the rich man as **burning in hell without any apparent disintegration of his body**. He appears to face an eternity of intense suffering without any hope of relief. Yet throughout the Bible, the ultimate fate of the wicked is presented as a state of total destruction.

Before we look at the details of the future for the lost, let’s review a few texts that provide an overarching view of the possible eternal destinies for all mankind. **John 3:16**, the most well-known verse in the Bible, says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Since “perish” is contrasted with eternal life, those who perish will not live forever in hell. The lost will come to an ultimate end.

Romans 6:23 concurs by stating, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Once again, Scripture confirms that the lost eventually die rather than continuing to burn in hell.

Finally, **Matthew 7:13-14** reads, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The two great options for eternity are either life (eternal) or destruction.

Additionally, there are many passages that specify the lost will finally face complete destruction. We begin with **Malachi 4:1**. This verse looks ahead to the final judgment and its attending punishment by proclaiming, “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall **leave them neither root nor branch.**”

When you want to get rid of a tree, you don’t just cut off its trunk. You also must remove all the roots. Likewise the lost will face total extinction.

Matthew 10:28 exhorts, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Greek “gehenna” = includes fire, a place of total destruction).” Destroy” in this text comes from the Greek word “apollumee” which means to destroy fully or kill. Also, the Greek word comes in the form of Aorist, infinitive, active which denotes non-continuous action. Thus, hell does NOT burn through ceaseless ages. It operates for a period of time and then ends.

The above passage confirms that hell (gehenna) completely terminates the existence of both body and soul (the spirit essence).

2 Peter 2:4-6 tells the future of both wicked people and demons as it exclaims, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [tartarus], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment [future]; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”

The utter annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrha provides an example of the ultimate destiny of the wicked. They will be reduced to ashes and live no more.

Just think! If today, the worst earthly criminal (a mass murderer) was subjected to non-stop torture, even for just a few days, prisoners’ rights groups and society at large would rise up to stop the abuse. So how could a loving God torture the lost with fire for eternity? The answer is, of course, that He will do no such a thing. Instead the lost suffer for a while before they vanish into smoke.

As an adjunct to this section, the following texts verify that the soul can indeed die and cease to function.

Psalms 22:20 reads, “Deliver my soul from the sword...” Yes, the soul can be killed.

Ezekiel 18:4 explains, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Indeed the soul can die.

Genesis 37:21 confirms “And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him [Joseph] out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him (literally, in Hebrew, soul).” The threat to murder Joseph literally meant killing a soul.

- 5) Recall how in the parable, the rich man only addresses Abraham in his request for mercy and intercession. Where is God the Father and Jesus in this story? Isn’t Jesus the only mediator

between heaven and other places? **1 Timothy 2:5** states, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

- 6) The parable we are studying indicates that there is fire in “Hades,” (the Greek word there translated “hell”). But this assertion is directly opposed to the whole of Scripture. The word Hades is used 9 other times in the New Testament and its Hebrew equivalent, “sheol,” – when translated as “hell” - is used 31 times in the Old Testament. In these 40 combined occurrences, fire is never associated with hell except in **Deuteronomy 32:22** when God sends fire out to destroy the entire earth, including the grave. (Even in this poetic text, fire is NOT portrayed as a natural element in hell [shoel].) Thus we have a consistent pattern throughout the Bible. Hades (and its Hebrew equivalent, sheol) are NOT places that include fire, except in the fictional parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Also, it is interesting that “sheol” is translated 31 other times as “grave” and 3 times as “pit.” These translations add to the evidence that fire is not a part of Hades. (Indeed, if one digs up a grave, does he ever find fire present? The answer is obviously “No.”)

There is, however, one Greek word translated “hell” that does include fire. The word is “gehenna” which appears 12 times in the New Testament. In eight of the twelve occurrences, fire is specifically included as an agent of punishment and annihilation (destruction).

- 7) Some argue that since the actual word “parable” is not included in the account of the rich man and Lazarus, that the story must be true, including all the details. But the book of Luke includes many other stories that everyone acknowledges are parables, though they do not include the word “parable.” Here are some examples:

Luke 11:24-26: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

This parable teaches that we need to fill our lives with God-approved thinking and action to replace the evil we are seeking to eliminate. Yet the word “parable” is not included in this account.

Luke 14:16-24: “Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

Luke does not use the word parable in this story even though the account is obviously a parable.

But the message is clear. Not everyone who is invited to Christ's supper will actually partake. Those who respond to Christ's call will receive their reward.

Following are two more accounts found in Luke that are certainly parables, even though that word is not included in the details:

Luke 15:11-32 (Read these verses about the prodigal son. Once again the word "parable" is not attached to the story.)

Luke 16:1-12 (Read these verses about the rich man and the unprofitable steward. Here is an obvious parable though the specific word is not included in the account.)

So the conclusion is certain. These parables do not include the word "parable" but the writing style shows they are indeed fictitious in their details.

Conclusion

The evidence is overwhelming! The specifics included in the rich man and Lazarus parable should not be considered an accurate description of what happens after death. The particulars are characterized by bizarre assertions and details that are in total conflict with the remaining testimony of Holy Writ. Note: For almost all parables, the details are not meant to convey truth in themselves. Instead, the **details** are only included to put us in a frame of mind to best understand and receive the core message, usually found at the end of the parable.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus does, however, convey at least two great truths:

- 1) Unfaithful religious leaders (represented by the covetous, money-loving rich man) will not enjoy God's favor throughout eternity.
- 2) We need to read and follow the messages contained in the Bible (including Moses and the prophets) if we would be found in God's eternal kingdom. We should not expect someone from the dead to arise to teach us!

Feel free to contact the author if you have any questions or if you simply want to discuss this paper: andrew.manthe@att.net.