

SECTION II. "DEATH" EXAMINED

III. THE NATURE OF DEATH EXAMINED

A. THE GREEK CONCEPT OF DEATH CLEARLY DID NOT MEAN ANNIHILATION

The Greeks believed that in death souls were conscious. They were rowed across the river, Styx, by Charon. There, Hades, the god of the dead, took charge over them. The wicked were kept in a place called, Tartarus, which the Hebrews called lower Sheol.

Words must be used in the sense of the language and context. The New Testament was written in Greek. It is nonsense to speak as if those who accept continuing existence of the soul in death were denying death. Greek word for death did not mean to cease to exist.

It is further claimed that our concepts are borrowed from Plato. The fact that Plato held some similar views and those Greek words are found in the New Testament, does not necessarily make either Plato or the New Testament wrong on points where they agree. God's teachings are older than any religion, and false religions have themselves borrowed from God's teaching. The early "fathers" opposed errors in Plato's teaching and argued that the truth he had came from his knowledge of the teaching of Moses.

Again, some would tie us to the traditions of the Pharisees growing out of the apocalyptic literature between the Old and New Testaments. Some of the terminology of that time, ("gehenna") was employed in the New. However, the Bible is our authority. What they accepted from the Scriptures was no less true. Paul himself sided with the Pharisees (Ac. 23:6), but that does not mean that Paul's source of belief was from them. In verse 8 the Pharisees are credited with believing in resurrection, angel and spirit. I believe they were right. But, if by doing so, we must be accused of "borrowing from the Pharisees," then by the same "logic," those who reject these things must be borrowing from Aristotle and the Sadducees.

B. "DEATH," AS PRESENTED IN SCRIPTURE, DOES NOT MEAN ANNIHILATION

1. FIGURATIVE USE OF THE WORD

-**1Tim. 5:6.** "She that liveth in pleasure is DEAD (annihilated?) while she liveth"

-**Luke 15:24.** "My son was DEAD (annihilated?) and is alive; was lost (#622 "apollumi"). (He had only gone away and wasted his substance)

-**Rev. 3:1.** "Thou hast a name that thou livest but thou art DEAD"

-Luke 9:60. “Let the DEAD bury their dead”

It is clear that the second “dead” is literal (cf. 9:59) – “annihilated”?

-1Jhn 3:14. “He that loveth not abideth in DEATH”

-Jude 12. “Twice DEAD” (yet still conscious)

-Rev. 20:14. The lake of fire is the second “death,” yet the devil, the “beast”(cf. Rev. 17; cf. Dan. 7), the “false prophet” (Rev. 13:11- 18), and men who receive the mark of the beast, are all said to be tormented there (Rev. 20:10, 15; 14:9-11). The false prophet clearly represents a man (2Thes. 2) and the beast is a kingdom composed of kings and men (Rev. 17).

-Isa. 66:24. The “dead BODIES” of the wicked were not to be destroyed “from one new moon to another.” Their worm would not die and their fire would not be quenched.

Clearly, “death” does not indicate annihilation nor absence of intellect.

2. PHYSICAL DEATH

-Mat. 10:28. Man “cannot kill the soul.”

-James 4:5. The body without the spirit is dead.

-Luke 16:18-31. The rich man died and in Hades was tormented.

He desired Lazarus to go back from the dead to his brothers.

“Death” used in this way clearly does not mean that all conscious existence ceases.

-Luke 16:25-31. Abraham, who was physically dead, spoke to the rich man.

-Rev. 6:9-11. John saw souls who had been slain crying out.

(This was during physical death)

-John 2:19. Jesus said of the resurrection of His body, “*I will raise it up.*” To do this he had to be conscious.

OBJECTION: “Jesus was first raised by God as a spirit and afterwards raised his body.”

ANSWER: This explanation successfully evades the point, but makes Christ non-existent for three days.

-Luke 23:43. Jesus told the thief “this day you will be with me in paradise.”

OBJECTION: George R. Berry wrote, “There is no authority anywhere in the Greek text for punctuation.” Change the punctuation and he is merely affirming to the thief that when he gets to Paradise he can remember that on that day he promised it.

-Acts 20:26. I bear you record this day that I am free from the blood of all men.

-Deut. 6:6; 8:11; 10:13; 11:8, 27, 28; 13:18; 19:9; 27:4; 31:2.¹

ANSWER: While the original Greek has no punctuation, it is written in such a way as to not need a comma to give the correct sense. The overwhelming mass of translators have used the comma to express that sense.

-Luke 23:43. I say unto you, today you will be with me in paradise.

legoo	soi,	Seemeron	Met'	Emou	Esee	en	too	paradeisoo.
I say	to you,	today	with	Me	you will be	in	the	Paradise.

Compare this with the Greek in Acts 20:26 (below) where he indicates that was the day he was testifying to them. The construction is entirely different.

-Ac. 20:26. I testify unto you this day, that I am pure

marturomai	humin	en	tee	seemeron	Heemera,	hoti	katharos	eimi
I testify	to you	on	the	same	Day	that	clean	I am

-Luke 23:46. Jesus commended his spirit into the hands of the father.

-Mat. 27:50. Jesus yielded up the spirit.

-1Pet. 3:19, 20. In the spirit Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison who were disobedient in days of Noah.

Spirits of those who disobeyed in the days of Noah are “in prison.” This indicates restrained but continued existence.

-Acts 7:59. Steven cried out, “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*”

-1Thes. 4:4. When Jesus returns he brings those who have fallen asleep in Jesus with him.

-Heb. 12:22, 23. “*ye are come unto ...the spirits of just men made perfect...*”
 “Made perfect” (11:40) is “heavenly” (11:16)

¹ List by Anthony Buzzard who cites them in the Septuagint.
 Booklet: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE? 1986 ed. p.56.
 Note: Some are mistaken references and none of them have any resemblance to Luke 23:43 in the Greek.

-Heb. 11:5. Enoch was translated that he should not see death (Gen. 5:24). This seems to be consistent with being instantly changed, perhaps as in (1Cor. 15: 51,52). Since in John 3:13 Jesus said that no man has ascended up into heaven, Enoch could not have gone there, therefore he must have gone to Hades without dying.

-Gen. 35:18. Her soul was departing for she died.

Here we have death clearly defined as departure of the soul.

-Gen. 2:17; 3:22-23. In the day that you eat you shall surely die.

Death began that day but they were not annihilated.

-Gen. 37:33, 35. Jacob saw death as his going to his son, Joseph.

-2Sam. 12:23. David saw death as his going to his son.

-Ps. 90:10. We “fly away”

-1Kings 17:21-22. The soul returned to the body when raised.

-Job. 11:20. “*giving up the ghost.*”

-Ecc. 12:7. The spirit returns to God who gave it.

-Ecc. 3:21. The question is raised whether any under the sun can know that the Spirit of man goes upward while the spirit of the beast goes downward. Certainly someone believed that and it is not denied. It is just that no living person can by observation know it.

-Job 34:14. At death, God gathers His spirit and his breath.

-Jonah 2:2. Jonah spoken of as being in “Sheol” when he was conscious in the belly of the “whale.”

-1Sam. 28:12-17. Samuel, who was dead, spoke to Saul and warned of his coming death.

-Luke 9:30-31. In a vision, Moses and Elijah, spoke with Jesus on the mount discussing Jesus’ coming death. Moses had died (Deut. 34:5-6) and his body was taken by Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9). It makes no sense that Jesus was discussing his death with someone who did not exist.

Visions were often of real things.

-**Ac. 26:16, 19.** Paul saw and heard Jesus in a “vision” (1Cor. 9:1; 15:8).

-**Acts 9:12.** Paul saw Ananias coming to him.

-**2Cor. 12:1-4.** Paul indicated that he could be in the third heaven “out of the body” (Probably referring to his stoning in Acts 14:19, 20) and hear unspeakable words.

-**Phil'p. 1:20-25.** “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh, --if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake...”*

(He expected that at death he would be with Christ.)

2Cor. 5:1-10. Paul said,

1 *For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. 2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: 3 if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. 5 Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6 Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord 7 (for we walk by faith, not by sight); 8 we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord. 9 Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. 10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things (done) in the body, according to what he hath done, whether (it be) good or bad. (ASV)*

Note that when we leave this body we have a new one in the heavens. This appears to be a present promise. If it refers to the promise of resurrection then note that this body is a house in which we dwell and he suggests the possibility of being unclothed – out of the body. That does not indicate annihilation.

-**Job 27:8.** God “*takes away*” the soul of the hypocrite.

-**1Cor. 15:35-44.** The dead are not quickened unless the body dies.

The meaning of “die” in this passage suggests something unlike annihilation. The seed decays and a new body is formed from it but something called “it” continues to exist. If the inner life of that seed had ceased it would never have sprouted.

C. OBJECTIONS OF THOSE WHO CONTEND THAT THE DEAD ARE UNCONSCIOUS

1. Ecc. 9:5. "...*the dead know not anything...*"

ANSWER:

2Sam. 15:11. Two hundred men "*knew not anything.*" Their lack of knowledge applied only to the area of consideration. It did not mean they were unconscious. Solomon's statement must be viewed contextually.

Likewise, Ecclesiastes is primarily the thoughts of Solomon's heart concerning things as they appeared, "*under the sun*" or "*upon the earth*". (1:9, 13, 14; 2:3, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:2, 13, 18, 20; 6:1, 12; 7:11; 8:9, 14, 15, 17; 9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 10:5.)

It also says, "*neither have they any more a reward.*" To insist that this is universal excludes the righteous from the reward of our eternal life. This is similar to verse 2 which says, "*All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked...*" This is limited by the context.

Also, verse 6 states that . "*...neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.*" If this is viewed as being unqualified then the passage excludes the resurrection.

2. Ecc. 9:10. "*There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest.*"

ANSWER

Again, this must be viewed as qualified by the context. These are thoughts of Solomon's heart concerning things "*under the sun.*" (See above). Under the sun there is no work, device, knowledge or wisdom when we are in the grave. Even those of us who believe the soul continues to exist after death of the body commonly make such statements.

3. -Ecc. 3:19-21.

"I said in my heart, It is because of the sons of men, that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are but as 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 (spirit); and man hath no preeminence above the beasts: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?"

The problem is the annihilationist fail to recognize the context. As shown above, the consideration here is from the human view, "*under the sun.*" From our earthly

perspective we have no way of knowing whether the death of man is above that of the beast. Solomon indicates this is his personal musing (“*I said in my heart*”- Ecc. 2:15; 3:17, 18; 9:1). To make it otherwise is to deny the resurrection (“*who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?*” 3:22; cf also 9:5, 6) and many other truths revealed elsewhere in the book.

4. Psalms 146:4. “*His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth. In that very day his thoughts perish.*”

ANSWER: The marginal reading says, “thoughts” indicates his “purposes.” So far as this life is concerned, his plans are ended.

5. Psalms 6:5 “*for in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks? (cf. Ps. 30:9; 88:11)*

ANSWER: He was beseeching that God not cut him off. Dying under the anger of God (6:1) would end the opportunity to participate in remembrance or thanksgiving to God (such as worship in the temple). A dead body in the grave does not praise God.

6. -Psalms 115:17. “*The dead praise not Jehovah, Neither any that go down into silence.*”

ANSWER:

This passage is much like the above. From our human perspective, the dead no longer participate in the praise of Jehovah. These words are such as any of us might say.

7. Death is described as “sleep”:

-John 11:11-13. “*Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep...*” “Lazarus is dead”

-1Cor. 15:51. “*We shall not all sleep*”

-1Thes. 4:14. “*Them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus...*”

-1Thes. 5:10. “*Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him*”

ANSWER: The body “sleeps” in the grave. Perhaps there is even reduced mental activity of the soul, but sleep is not annihilation. In Scripture, many revelations were given during sleep.

-Gen. 28:11-16. Jacob saw a ladder from heaven.

-Gen. 37:5-11. Joseph dreamed of his brothers bowing to him.

-Gen. 41:2-8. Pharaoh dreamed of the coming famine.

-Dan. 7. Daniel dreamed of the four kingdoms.

D. OBJECTION: ONLY GOD HAS IMMORTALITY

-1Tim. 6:16 “*...who only has immortality.*” (#110 “Athanasia”)

This is the favorite argument of annihilationists. They claim that, since only God has immortality and it is given to the faithful, when we die the mental faculties must cease. This is called, “conditional immortality,” hence they call themselves “conditionalists.”

ANSWER: Lack of immortality does not indicate lack of conscious existence. If God only has immortality then the devil and his angels, Beelzebub, prince of demons, demons, unclean spirits etc. must also be mortal, yet they exist as conscious spirits without being immortal. Likewise, man has a spirit. That spirit does not have to be immortal to depart from the body and continue to exist.

Both Moses (Luke 9:29-31) and Samuel (1Sam. 28:12-19) were mortal yet they spoke after they were dead before Christ died and was raised to give immortality.

THE GREEK WORDS FOR IMMORTAL

#861 “aphtharsia”

Strong: “from 862; *incorruptibility*; gen. unending existence; (fig.) *genuineness*:--immortality, incorruption, sincerity.”

#862 “aphthartos”

Strong: “from *i* (as a neg. particle) and a der. of 5351; *undecaying* (in essence or continuance):--not (in-, un-) corruptible, immortal.”

#110 “athanasia”

Strong: “...from a compound of *i* (as a neg. particle) and #2288; *death, lessness*:--immortality.”

Scriptures:

1Cor. 15:42 “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption (#5356 fthora); it is raised in incorruption (#861aphtharsia):”

1Cor. 15:50 “*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption (#5356 fthora) inherit incorruption (#861 aphtharsia).*”

1Cor. 15:53 “*For this corruptible (#5349 ftharton) must put on incorruption (#861 aphtharsia), and this mortal (#2349 thneeton) must put on immortality (#110 athanasia).*”

1Cor. 15:54 “*When this corruptible (#5349 ftharton) shall have put on incorruption (#861 aphtharsia), and this mortal (#2349 thneeton) shall have put on immortality (#110 athanasia), then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*”

It is clear that mortality has to do with the body dying or becoming corrupted. (1Cor. 15:35-36, 44, 50)

James 2:26 says, *the body without the spirit is dead.*

The **outward man** “decays” or “perishes”(1311diaphtheiro). However, we also have an **inward man** that can be renewed day by day. (2Cor. 4:16)

OBJECTION: “Spirit” is not even used in the same verse with “immortal.”

ANSWER: That is not linguistically correct. In 1Pet. 3:4 the same Greek word, *aphthartos* (#862) (above translated “immortal”) is translated “not corruptible.” Nor is it substantially correct since “Spirit” is once used with the word “eternal” (#166 *aionios*) in reference to God (Heb. 9:14).

Since only God has immortality, it is not surprising that no other spirit is spoken of as being immortal or eternal. In any case the whole issue of whether “spirit” and “immortal” are in the same verse is irrelevant. God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and He has immortality.

Spirits are never said to be immortal but neither are they ever said to be mortal, die, or be killed. Paul indicates that, while out of the body, a man could continue to intellectually function (cf. 2Cor. 12:2-4).