



September 03, 2021

What Happens at Death?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

The fall Feast Season is upon us! There's a buzz in the air as God's family is making final plans for worship, travel, lodging etc.

These Holy Days of God that we'll be observing have profound meaning!

On the Feast of Trumpets coming up this coming Tuesday, we'll again took careful note of just how important the Resurrection is!

Next we'll examine how important the removal of our arch adversary, Satan the devil is, and that we become "at one" with our Creator.

Shortly after we'll observe the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day or Last Great Day. I can only imagine the multitude of people there will be during the Great White Throne Judgement.

It's easy to become distracted from God's plan with all the calamity going on in the world around us, and it has affected many. That's part of the purpose, to get your and my focus off God and on the physical.

This past several months, more and more people are worried about dying, and it has not really lessened.

This world is so confused as to what God's Holy Days are and mean, and also what happens to us after we die. Watching parents weep over loss of their sons in the recent explosion pulls at our heart strings for sure. To many, this is final, and they struggle with what will happen to the person after his or her death.

A couple of weeks ago we were examining the truth about what happens to human beings at death. Much of Christendom believes that man has an *immortal soul* or some conscious essence that lives on after the body dies. One of the early proponents of this philosophy was the Greek philosopher, Plato. "The immortality of the soul was a principal doctrine of the Greek philosopher, Plato . . . In Plato's thinking, the soul . . . was self-moving and indivisible . . . It existed before the body which it inhabited, and which it would survive" ((The Fire That

Consumes, Edward William Fudge, 1994, p. 32).

Let's examine several Scriptures that are mistakenly used to promote the idea that man has a soul that lives on after death. First, let's examine the words of Jesus in Mt 10:28: "*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" Simply stated, Christ was showing that when one man kills another the resulting death is only temporary; God can raise anyone to life again either in this life (see Matthew 9:23-25; 27:52; John 11:43-44; Acts 9:40-41; 20:9-11) or the life to come.

We must revere God, who alone can obliterate all possibility of any later resurrection to life. When God destroys one in "hell," that person's destruction is permanent." We notice that Jesus said the soul can be destroyed in hell. The Greek word translated "hell" is *geenna* or *Gehenna*. *Gehenna* was originally the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned. At times even the dead bodies of criminals were burned there. Jesus uses this as a *type* of the future lake of fire described in Revelation 20: 14-15 and those cast into this fire will suffer the second death -- not an eternal life of torture in hell fire!

The Book of Malachi refers to this death brought about by the lake of fire. "*For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,*" Says the LORD of hosts, "*That will leave them neither root nor branch.*" (Malachi 4:1) The inference is that the wicked will have no chance of coming back to life again and both the root and branch will be dead.

Let's look at Revelation 6:9-11: "*When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*"

First, we notice that these souls had "been slain" and were "killed." They are not alive. As we reviewed recently, "*For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing*" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). These souls symbolically, not literally, cry out, "Avenge our blood!" This can be compared to Abel's blood symbolically "crying out" to God from the ground (Genesis 4:10). Though neither dead souls nor blood can literally speak, these phrases figuratively demonstrate that a God of justice will not forget the evil deeds of mankind and will avenge the saints who have been treated so horribly.

Next, let's look at Revelation 20:10: "*The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire*

and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." The context is the release of Satan and the demons following the thousand year reign of Christ. The fate of the beast and false prophet is described in: Revelation 19:20: *"Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone."*

The lake of fire will completely burn up the wicked as Malachi 4:1 describes. The word "are" is in italics in the KJV and NKJV translations of Revelation 20:10. It was not in the original manuscripts and was supplied by the translators as they saw fit. The word to be supplied would be more accurately stated as "were cast" the plural of "was cast" used earlier in the sentence. The beast and false prophet were cast into the lake of fire and burned up and destroyed a thousand years before the devil was cast into the lake of fire. Also, the Greek word translated "forever" does not always mean eternity or infinity. It can simply refer to something that will not be stopped, that will continue as long as conditions allow. This passage is simply describing fires associated with this devastation that burn as long as they have fuel to consume, after which they simply burn out.

A related passage is found in Revelation 14:9-11: *". . . If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."*

Notice in this passage that the smoke from these terrifying events ascends forever-it does not say that "the people's actual torment continues forever". The smoke is no doubt associated with God's wrath poured out on earth as described in chapter 16 - which includes widespread destruction, great heat, warfare and a massive earthquake. All these events will generate massive fires and a huge amount of smoke. The properties of smoke are such that it "ascends forever"- meaning that nothing will prevent or stop it. Being a column of heated gas, containing tiny suspended particles, it rises, expands and eventually dissipates. The reference in Revelation 14:11 to the wicked receiving "no rest day or night" speaks of those living humans who continue to worship the beast and his image during this time.

We'll examine a few more Scriptures next time that are often misused to present an immortal soul teaching.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

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