

1. THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

For the living know that they shall die, but **the dead know nothing whatsoever**; there is no further reward for them; indeed remembrance of them is forgotten. (Ecclesiastes 9.5-6 cv)

One of the greatest hindrances to seeing, let alone understanding, the purpose and plan of the eons pertains to the true meaning of death. For this reason, it is essential that we understand this subject, along with related topics, such as sheol, hades, gehenna, hell, judgment, resurrection and immortality. Without a proper understanding of these topics, it is safe to state that one will have a difficult time comprehending and appreciating the truth of God's purpose.

Today, it is also safe to state that there are many views about death, both within and without Christendom, ¹ and these views often go hand-in-hand with the concept of the immortality of the soul. If one believes that the soul never dies when the body returns to the soil of the earth, then the soul must go someplace to reside upon death of the person. Consequently, many people believe the soul must go either to the bliss of heaven or to the fiery torment of hell.

Go to most any Christian funeral service today and you will hear the pastor talk in glowing terms about how the dearly departed is looking down on all the gathered, as if the person were an angel. No place in Scripture are we given such a sentimental picture. As the thinking (or, teaching) goes, the believers go to *heaven* and eternal bliss ***immediately*** upon their death and the lost go to *hell*, a place of fire and torment, ***immediately*** upon their death. All the dead are either in heaven or hell, waiting for their respective resurrections, at which time believers will receive a new body; and the unbelievers will be cast alive into another inferno, the lake of fire, to be toasted and tormented forever and ever, with no chance of escape, because God is angry at them.

This thinking makes for great sermons to stir up fear to scare people into the kingdom, but it is based on defining death as something other than death. Instead of death being truly death, that is, a state of unconsciousness, death is seen as merely an ***immediate*** pathway to another life, either one of glory or one of torment.

What is physical death?

Webster's Dictionary defines *death* as "extinction or cessation of life or feeling; destruction." Notice that life ceases with death. There is no indication of life in

¹ *Christendom* is a general term that refers to all that holds to Christ or attaches Christ to its name, whether Christ is in it or not, and whether it is upholding the truth of Scripture or not. It is a conglomeration of everything that has the name of Christ stamped on it.

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

death. They are two opposites with each opposing the other. Simple logic demands that one precludes or shuts out the other, and this is the same way that Scripture views it. The only way out of death is the same way our Lord came out of death, and that is through resurrection from among the dead; it is through resurrection *life*.

It is most unfortunate that many people have redefined death as something other than death. They state that no one really dies, for the dead continue on in some other conscious state and place after their body physically dies. In other words, they work around the definition of death by defining death as referring only to the body. But, does Scripture reveal this?

To die shall you be dying.

To properly understand this matter, we must begin with the book of Genesis, which is the book of beginnings, and look at the way two literal translations render the creation of the first man. It is here that we discover the principles of God that uphold all Scripture, both Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament) and Greek Scripture (New Testament).

And Jehovah God formeth the man—dust from the ground, and breatheth into his nostrils breath of life, and the man becometh a living creature [soul]. (Genesis 2.7 YLT)

And forming is Ieue Alueim the human of soil from the ground, and He is blowing into his nostrils **the breath of the living**, and becoming is the human **a living soul**. (Genesis 2.7 cv)

And Jehovah God layeth a charge on the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden eating thou dost eat; and of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou dost not eat of it, for in the day of thine eating of it—**dying thou dost die**.’ (Genesis 2.16-17 YLT)

Yet from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you are not to be eating from it, for in the day you eat from it, **to die shall you be dying**. (Genesis 2.17 cv)

Man was created from the ground. Scripture describes man as *soilish*, that is, from the soil of the earth (see 1 Corinthians 15.47 cv). As we will see, all mankind returns to the soil as well.

Adam was given a warning not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in that day something would happen to Adam’s being that would infect him and, consequently, his entire race, that is, all mankind that would follow. Death would come upon mankind, something that Adam had not experienced.

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

Many English translations state that the warning was “you will surely die,” which has created confusion over its meaning, because it is obvious that Adam did not die a physical death at that moment, for he lived to the ripe old age of 930 years, *and he died*. The most common teaching on this verse holds that God did not mean physical death but a spiritual death, which is separation from God’s spirit. This is true; however, it is also true that the process of physically dying began in Adam; a fact that is overlooked by many, leading to an unscriptural view of physical death. For this reason, this chapter is devoted to the physical side of death.

We are given some indication of its meaning by referring to some of the more literal translations of the sacred Scriptures. The Young’s Literal Translation reads “*dying thou dost die*” and the Concordant Version reads “*to die shall you be dying*.” To understand these words, we need to see that there are two concepts being presented—the process of dying and death itself. When Adam ate of the tree, the process of death began, which could not be reversed. It took 930 years for the process to come to its consummation; nevertheless, the day came when Adam died, that is, his whole being died and his body returned to the soil from which he was formed.

Peter may have given us another possibility regarding the day. In reference to the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord, Peter declared: *But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years one day* (2 Peter 3.8 NASB). Adam died within one day—one 1,000-year day. Because of Adam’s fall, no one has lived on the earth an entire day of 1,000 years. ²

When Adam disobeyed God, the sentence of death fell upon him and his race. Another way of stating this is: In the day you eat from it, the death state will enter your being, for the process of dying (decay and corruption) will begin in your body until it leads to the ultimate conclusion, death, at which time you will return to the soil.

² Why did the death process take so long for Adam and all who lived prior to the great flood in Noah’s day? The atmosphere of the restored earth was ideal for mankind to live and grow. The earth was watered from below, and there was a covering of water in the atmosphere around the earth. This condition would have prevented dangerous rays from the sun from reaching the earth. The earth produced a bounty of food to maintain mankind. In essence, conditions were ideal for mankind. However, with the flood, the earth’s atmosphere changed, and the sun’s rays were not filtered as before the flood. Evidently because of this atmospheric change, God commanded man to eat animal meat, not just fruits and vegetables (Genesis 9.3). The change was not so much a punishment on mankind; but a necessity, so that mankind could adapt to the new conditions. Unfortunately, eating meat also shortened the life span of mankind, and over the next few generations, the life of man began to subside until it reached 120 years, as declared by the Lord (Genesis 6.3). Those who insist on only eating fruits and vegetables today cannot extend their lives beyond what has been set for man in this eon. In fact, it may be detrimental to their health in coping with the harsh conditions on earth today.

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

Death passed through into all mankind.

Paul, the apostle of the nations, who was given revelation directly from the Lord Jesus, adds to this understanding in his epistle to the Romans.

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.... (Romans 5.12 cv)

Now, this is one of the most important verses in Scripture in relation to what happened to Adam and subsequently all mankind, but it is also probably one of the most misunderstood verses. Generally, it is interpreted that because of Adam's sin all mankind became sinners and the so-called sin nature passed through into all mankind. So that there is no confusion, this is not what Paul tells us.

The order as presented in this verse is very important. It starts with Adam's original sin followed by death. Then we are told that death passed through into all mankind. Notice that sin was not passed through into all; it was death that was passed through into all. This order is very important; if you miss it you will go astray in understanding its meaning.

Adam sinned, and as a result of his sin, death came upon him, both the process of death and death itself. He became a dying man. Dying and its conclusion, death, passed through Adam into all mankind. In other words, mankind has no choice in the matter, for all die. As soon as we are born, the sentence of death is upon us. All of Adam's descendants (the whole human race) are born dying and are condemned to die the first death, whether they sin or not. ³ Thus, an innocent baby can die just a few seconds or minutes after pushing through the birth canal and entering this world, even though the infant has made no decisions, good or bad.

We all inherit death from Adam; this is the legacy that he has passed through into his race, which includes all of us.

Stated another way, death is made up of both the dying process, that is, corruption and mortality, and the death state itself, which is the result of the judgment and condemnation of God that fell upon mankind because of Adam's disobedience, his sin. Adam transmitted mortality to his race. First the dying process came upon Adam (very slow process of decay) and then death itself after 930 years. All of us have inherited death or corruption and mortality from Adam.

Before considering the matter of sin, you are encouraged to stop at this point and reread the above paragraphs in light of Romans 5.12 until its meaning becomes crystal clear. Be convinced that it was not sin that was passed through into all mankind, but it was death.

³ Interestingly, the material components of the human body undergo a complete change approximately every seven years. It has been proposed that, in a sense, the body dies every seven years.

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

Sin enters in because of death. It is the degrading or corruptible power of the dying process working in all mankind from the moment of birth that makes us sinners or, as Paul wrote, *constitutes* us sinners. Mankind sins because it is dying.

Adam sinned, and death entered him and his race. Because of Adam's one sin, death came upon all mankind; and because man begins the process of dying as soon as he is born, it does not take very long before sin is manifested in the flesh (i.e., consider a crying baby). Sin in mankind is a by-product of the death process. Sin reigns in death (Romans 5.21), that is, in the process of dying, and is the outcome or result of death in mankind. It is inescapable. It is the sting or "puncturer" of death (1 Corinthians 15.56).

It is important to realize that mortality is a weakness and causes each and every one of us to sin, that is, to miss the mark of God. We are incapable of reaching moral perfection no matter how hard we try. This is why death is such a great enemy of mankind. It causes us to fall short of the glory of God.

On which all sinned.

Once we come into an understanding of death and sin, there is one other matter that needs to be addressed related to mankind's liability for Adam's original sin.

.... thus death passed through into all mankind, **on which all sinned....**

The second part of this verse refers to sin; however, most translations word it in such a fashion that it makes it seem that sin is passed on. For example, many translations state *because all sinned*. Given this wording, it makes it sound as if sin comes first for all mankind and then death. But this is not what Paul meant.

The Concordant Version quoted above more accurately captures the thought with the phrase *on which all sinned*. To understand what this means we need to read on and consider the matter of imputation.

Imputed sin, imputed righteousness.

.... thus death passed through into all mankind, **on which all sinned**, for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not **imputed** when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one **the many died**, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, **abound to the many**. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, **death reigned through the one**, much more those who receive the

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

abundance of grace and of the gift of **righteousness will reign in life through the One**, Jesus Christ. So then as through **one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men**, even so through **one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men**. (ROMANS 5.12-18 NASB)

There is much meat in these verses; but it is not the intent to unfold all that they contain. What we need to see is that sin was imputed to all mankind. This is the meaning of the phrase *on which all sinned*. The word *impute* means “to ascribe good or evil to a person as coming from another.” In this case, it means to ascribe Adam’s sin to all even though all never committed the sin; thus all sinned. We know sin by the law; however, sin was in the world before the law, and the proof of this is that death reigned over mankind from Adam to Moses, who was first given the law. Accordingly, sin is not imputed when there is no law, but Paul makes the point that Adam’s sin was in fact imputed to all mankind, the many. In other words, even though none of us sinned in the manner of Adam, in His wisdom, God imputed Adam’s sin to all of us, *on which all sinned*.

Obviously, in a court of law this would seem most unfair. After all, why should we be held responsible for something that we did not do? If it stopped here, mankind appearing before the bar of God would have a legitimate case against God. It would be unjust. The good news is that it does not stop here, for God has made the way for His righteousness to be imputed to all mankind. In other words, God Himself has provided a way to remedy the matter of imputed sin, and this is through the one act of righteousness of Jesus Christ. Through His one act of dying for the sin of the world, righteousness is imputed to all. Please do not miss the glory of the imputation. Because of one man’s transgression, sin was imputed to the many, which refers to all mankind, and because of One Man’s act of righteousness, righteousness is imputed to the many, which refers to all mankind. As all died, so all are justified to life. Christ has been made unto us righteousness. The first Adam knew sin, and through him sin was imputed to all. The second Adam knew no sin, and through Him righteousness was imputed to all. Oh, the wisdom of God! Perfect justice!

He made **Him who knew no sin to be sin** on our behalf, so that we might become **the righteousness of God in Him**. (2 CORINTHIANS 5.21 NASB)

Other proofs.

Now, returning to death; it is hardly necessary to prove the point that humans are a dying race. We all know the human race is made up of sinners (thank God, we are saved by grace through faith), and eventually we will die, unless the Lord comes back in our lifetime. Physical death is inevitable for the righteous and the unrighteous, or for the believer and the unbeliever.

There are many who disagree with such a conclusion and prefer to hold only to the idea of spiritual death. Some argue that the way the Hebrew is worded in Genesis

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

2.17 indicates it had to be a spiritual death and not the process of physical death that leads to the death state. This begs for an answer: If the process did not begin at this point, then when did it begin?

However, there are two other sets of Scripture that shed light on the matter. The first is in 1 Kings 2.37. Solomon made a statement to Shimei that if he should leave Jerusalem, he would die. Actually, Solomon used the exact same phrase as found in Genesis 2.17: *“In the day...to die shall you be dying.”* Just as Adam disobeyed God, Shimei disobeyed the king. He crossed the brook Kidron, went to Gath and returned to Jerusalem. Shimei did not die on the day that he left and returned, but Solomon kept his promise and had him executed several days later. This is the same picture that we are given of Adam, only it took 930 years and not several days for death to come. For similar uses of this phrase, see 1 Samuel 14.44; 22.16; 2 Kings 1.4, 16; Jeremiah 26.8; Ezekiel 3.18; 33.8, 14.

The second is discovered in the Lord’s words to Adam after he had disobeyed.

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it **all the days of your life**. “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for **you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**” (Genesis 3.17-19 NASB)

It seems rather clear that the Lord God Himself explained to Adam what it meant to eat of the forbidden fruit and die. Adam’s life was placed in the confines of “the days of your life,” meaning a limit was placed on the number of days Adam would live. Then the Lord God added even more clarity by declaring that Adam would eat bread until he returned to the ground or soil from whence he came. In other words, at the end of the days of his life, Adam would physically die. Thus, it seems quite apparent that Scripture has built into it the very meaning of *to die shall you be dying*. Death is a return to the soil!

Death is opposite life.

Let us be clear that Scripture never teaches that death is merely another form of life. On the contrary, death is always the opposite of life. One precludes the other. If you are dead, you have no life. If you have life, you are not dead. We must guard ourselves from redefining words, particularly ones that are clearly presented in Scripture.

All the genealogies of Adam’s descendants presented in Genesis 5 begin with *he lived* and conclude with *he died*. Adam lived....So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty, *and he died*. Seth lived....So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, *and he died*. Lamech lived....So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, *and he died*. There is no reference

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

to anyone going on to live in some other form. He, the person, simply died. Scripture clearly makes a distinction between life and death (see Genesis 42.1, 2; 43.8; 47.19; Numbers 4.17, 18, 19; Deuteronomy 33.6; 2 Kings 18.32; 20.1; Psalm 118.17; Ezekiel 18.21, 28; 33.15).

In *The Revelation [Unveiling] of Jesus Christ*, and in very plain language, death is declared as not living.

And I perceived thrones, and they are seated on them, and judgment was granted to them. And the souls of those executed because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who do not worship the wild beast or its image, and did not get the emblem on their forehead and on their hand—they also live and reign with Christ a thousand years. (**The rest of the dead do not live** until the thousand years should be finished.) This is the former resurrection. (Revelation 20.4-5 cv)

Some will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years, and some will not live. Why will some not live? Because they are dead! They simply cannot be dead yet alive in some other place in some other form at the same time, without contradicting Scripture. Jesus Himself told His disciples that He is the Resurrection and the Life, and he who believes in Him will live even if he dies (see John 11.25). He did not state that no one will die if he believes, but He did imply that the day of the resurrection will come, and all in Christ will live and never die again. This is the teaching of Scripture and the hope of believers, and ultimately all mankind. Jesus is alive evermore, and because of His life, we too will live in immortality one day; but that day has not come yet, for we await the presence of the Lord (see Revelation 1.18; 1 Corinthians 15.16-28).

To die is to cease to be.

Now, some might still argue that death is not really death but merely passing into another existence, another state of consciousness. Again, let us allow Scripture to teach us, for if we do, we will discover that death means to cease to be. It is even referred to as destruction and extermination.

Contrary to popular opinion, death is not a state of consciousness. Consider Job's words on death.

“The eye of him who sees me will behold me no longer; Your eyes will be on me, but **I will not be.**” (Job 7.8 NASB)

“Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Would that **I had died** and **no eye had seen me!** I should have been as though **I had not been**, carried from womb to tomb.” (Job 10.18-19 NASB)

“But **man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires**, and **where is he?** As water evaporates from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dried up, so

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, **he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.** Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, that You would set a limit for me and remember me! **If a man dies, will he live again?** All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes.”
(Job 14.10-14 NASB)

One who lies prostrate in death surely does not sound like one who is walking on streets of gold. Job’s cry over death was *“I will not be.”* Consider Job’s profound question: If a man dies, will he live again? But Job answered his own question by acknowledging that one day he will be changed. He will be awakened from his sleep and will be changed. This was the only hope that Job had. Do you see any life in the death state as stated by Job? Of course not; there is no life in death. Death is the state of *“I will be not.”*

David lamented over his condition that if he died or departed, then he would be no more (see Psalm 39.13). Rachel was weeping over her dead children because *they were no more* (see Jeremiah 31.15; Matthew 2.16-18). There was no consolation that these innocent ones had gone to a better place. They were dead!

Death is also described as a destruction and an extermination (see Genesis 6.17; Deuteronomy 2.32-34; Joshua 10.34-40; 1 Samuel 15.7-8; 2 Samuel 24.15, 16; Luke 17.26-29; Acts 3.23; 1 Corinthians 10.9, 10; 2 Thessalonians 1.7-10 [*eonian* or age-during destruction]). It is a great enemy, not only of man but of all creatures on the earth. Isaiah declared that they, that is, the horse and the mighty men, will lie down together (die) and not rise again, for they have been quenched and extinguished like a wick (see Isaiah 43.17). So, man and beast are said to be extinct when they die.

Now, not only does Scripture describe death as a cessation but also a sleep.

Death is a sleep of the person.

Death is described as a sleep of the person, not just of the body. David, the Psalmist, cried out to the Lord: Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, or *I will sleep the sleep of death* (Psalm 13.3 NASB). Notice that David said *I will sleep*, not just his body, but his whole being.

Job, considered perhaps the oldest writing in the Hebrew Scriptures, referred to the death state as applying to the person as well. The man, that is, the person expires at death.

And a man dieth, and becometh weak, and **man expireth**, and **where is he?** (Job 14.10 YLT)

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

The question of *where is he* refers to the person, not merely his body, for surely the living would know where the dead body has been placed. Thus, it is the person who is no longer seen and whose whereabouts are unknown.

Because it did not shut the opening of my mother's womb, or hide trouble from my eyes. "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me, and why the breasts, that I should suck? For now I would have lain down and been quiet; **I would have slept** then, I would have been at rest, with kings and with counselors of the earth, who rebuilt ruins for themselves; or with princes who had gold, who were filling their houses with silver. Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, as infants that never saw light. There the wicked cease from raging, and there the weary are at rest. The prisoners are at ease together; **they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master.**" (Job 3.10-19 NASB; see Revelation 20.12)

Notice that it is Job himself who would have died, expired, lain down, been quiet, slept, been at rest. He would have joined the righteous and the unrighteous, or the great and the small, who no longer hear the voice of the living.

Consider what Jeremiah declared: "*And I have caused its princes to drink, and its wise men, its governors, and its prefects, and its mighty ones, and they have slept a sleep age-during* [eonian], *and they awake not—an affirmation of the king, Jehovah of Hosts is His name*" (Jeremiah 51.57 YLT). They, that is, the persons, have slept, not just their bodies. Also, note that they do not awake. Or, consider the death of Moses: *And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers* (Deuteronomy 31.16 KJV [CV]).

In referring to his friend Lazarus, Jesus also referred to death as a sleep and made it very personal.

This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend **Lazarus has fallen asleep**; but I go, so that **I may awaken him out of sleep.**" The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now **Jesus had spoken of his death**, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, "**Lazarus is dead**, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him." (John 11.11-15 NASB)

Could our Lord Jesus have made it any clearer than this? He described Lazarus in a very personal way, as if to say, *our friend who is asleep*. The disciples, who often had a difficult time understanding their Master, thought Jesus meant Lazarus was not dead, but Jesus corrected them: "*Lazarus died.*" Jesus did *not* say that Lazarus' body was dead and that he was in a better place, as so many say today. Jesus went to awaken *him*, the person of Lazarus. Thus, out of the mouth of our Lord, death is a sleep, and it is the person who is dead.

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

Finally, Paul was questioned by the believers in Thessalonica about their believing loved ones who had died in Christ. Notice that Paul did not comfort the brethren by telling them that their loved ones were in heaven. In fact, he did just the opposite. He stated that they (the persons) were asleep, that is, dead in Christ, not alive in heaven in Christ, but in the grave awaiting the presence of the Lord. They were safe and secure because they were asleep in Jesus, waiting for God's Son from heaven, just as those who were alive and remain were waiting, and just as we are waiting today (1 Thessalonians 1.10).

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about **those who are asleep**, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those **who have fallen asleep in Jesus**. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede **those who have fallen asleep**. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and **the dead in Christ** will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 NASB)

What needs to be seen in these verses is that the believer is asleep, not just his or her body, and that the person will be roused from the state of death, not merely a body. Paul's revelation given by the word of the Lord refutes the thinking that death became something other than death after the resurrection of Jesus, that is, believers do not enter into death but into another life. For those who believe on Jesus in this wicked eon, there is only one way out of death, and that is the way that Christ Himself came out of death. The cross in itself did not change the fate of mankind at death, believer and unbeliever alike. Only the resurrection changes the ultimate fate of mankind. To think that believers *in* death go to be with the Lord by some other means is contrary to Scripture. We are to follow His path unless we are the fortunate ones who will be alive and remain on earth when He comes, in which case we will not enter death but be transfigured with glorified, immortal bodies, which is our hope and expectation.

Paul confirmed these thoughts and expanded upon them in his letter to the Corinthians in his defense of the resurrection of Christ and all the saints, and, ultimately, all mankind. (see 1 Corinthians 15.16-18, 51-57).

But now Christ has been raised from [the] **dead!** He became the first-fruits of the ones **having fallen asleep** [fig., **having died**] (1 Corinthians 15.20 ALT).

All who are dead are asleep because when Christ died He too was asleep. He is the first to come out of death, to the glory of God.

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

Sleep for the believer is like the sound sleep that we experience when we go to bed at night. Our whole being, including our soul, is unconscious to our surroundings while asleep. We, as a person, are asleep, not just our body. When we wake in the morning, it is as if we had just fallen asleep with no interval between our falling asleep and our waking. Thus, it is the same in death. The sleep of death wipes out the interval between the moment of death and the moment of resurrection. It will seem as if the moment of resurrection immediately follows the moment of death, even though they could have been hundreds or thousands of years apart. A day will come, and we pray soon, when the dead in Christ will awaken from their sleep of death.

Now, let us expand on this thought of death as a sleep.

The dead are not conscious of anything.

Consider Solomon's wisdom regarding the dead. As you do, remember that the wisdom that Solomon had was a gift from God. He was not some sort of ruler who was prattling on to impress others. He spoke the wisdom of God, which cannot change and does not change with the times.

For the living know that they shall die, but **the dead know nothing whatsoever**; there is no further reward for them; indeed remembrance of them is forgotten. (Ecclesiastes 9.5-6 cv)

For the living know that they die, and **the dead know not anything**, and there is no more to them a reward, for their remembrance hath been forgotten. Their love also, their hatred also, their envy also, hath already perished, and they have no more a portion to the age in all that hath been done under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 9.5-6 YLT)

The living are conscious that death will come to them, but **the dead are not conscious of anything**, and they no longer have a reward, because there is no memory of them. (Ecclesiastes 9.5 BBE)

All that thy hand findeth to do, with thy power do, for **there is no work, and device, and knowledge, and wisdom in Sheol** [unseen] whither thou art going. (Ecclesiastes 9.10 YLT)

There is nothing where the dead go, and they know nothing in death, and they do nothing in death. Death is a cessation of all!

There is something tremendous in the words *the dead know nothing whatsoever*. When we die, we do not know that we are dead. It is just like a deep sleep; we do not know that we are asleep. We lay our head on the pillow and consciousness of our surroundings ceases until we are awakened. While asleep, we know nothing whatsoever that is transpiring around us. Although we might be asleep for eight hours, more or less, when we awake, it is as if we never lost consciousness. In fact,

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

as far as we are concerned we never did lose consciousness. We simply were asleep. Death is exactly the same type of experience. We will know nothing in death. In fact, we will not even know that we are dead. Think about it! This is tremendous.

Practically all of us have been so programmed in this matter of death that, with very few exceptions, we have the concept that even though we die we will have some consciousness that we are dead. Dear brethren, wipe this concept out of your thinking. We will know nothing, even the fact that we are dead.

This is tremendous! Although the process of dying is at work in all of us, and some of us might experience pain as death approaches, none of us will *ever* experience death itself. As far as we are concerned, when the Lord awakens us from our sleep in the twinkling of an eye through resurrection at the last trump, no matter how long the sleep of death has been, we will awaken as if we never lost consciousness. What does this mean? It means that, although we will be unconscious, we will not know it. For us who believe, death is simply an interlude between consciousness in our physical bodies and consciousness in our new glorified, spiritual bodies.

There is one more vital point to be made in this matter of the sleep of death. Some might wonder what happens to our identity and memory in death. Is it lost forever? Again, consider our natural sleep. Do we lose our identity when we sleep? Do we normally forget what happened the day before? Of course we don't! When we wake, we are our usual loving or hateful self, or whatever character or temperament we might have. Do we doubt for a minute that God is able to maintain who we are? Paul declared that in a twinkling of an eye we all will be changed. This is God's view. Remember God is not hindered by time as we are. Even if thousands of years pass for those in death, time is not a factor. Those thousands of years are merely the twinkling of an eye to God. Nothing is lost in the twinkling of an eye. Praise God for His wisdom!

An illustration—the computer.

A crude illustration might help to understand the matter of death likened to sleep. God is the giver of life. When *Yahweh Elohim* formed man from the soil and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2.7 TSS), it was as if He turned a light switch to the on position. Prior to *Yahweh Elohim* turning on the switch, Adam knew nothing. In like fashion, when *Yahweh Elohim* takes away the breath of life from man, it is as if He turns off the switch. When the switch is turned off, there is no more life and man knows nothing. When the switch is turned on in the resurrection, life returns and the man regains his knowledge and memory of who he is.

We see almost the exact same illustration in relation to man and his creative ability? Remember, God is the Creator; He is a creative genius beyond anything or anyone we know. However, He also created man with a genius or, we could say, an ability to create things from the things that God spoke into being. It is evident that

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

man has a creative genius that, in some small measure, is in the likeness of his Creator. Just consider the marvels of the industrial revolution, space exploration, the technology and information age, and the countless number of inventions and the most amazing engineering feats that have come about in the last century alone.

One such invention that revolutionized the world is the computer, which is an amazing invention. I use a computer to write what you are now reading, but I have no clue how my computer works. But I do know one thing; I can work on it all day long and at the end of the day shut it off knowing that all I stored in its memory will be there the next day when I turn it on again. All it needs to give me back what I placed in it is power and a flip of its switch. Voila! All that I placed in it the day before is still there for me to edit or to do whatever I want to it. There is a more recent invention that works well with computers that is called a flash drive. Most of them are very small devices (almost like a short, stubby pencil) on which I can store all my writings. These devices have no power of their own, but they can store all the information I want on them to transport from computer to computer. The data just sits on these little devices until I call them up. I just plug them into any computer and again, voila, all that I stored there is available to me.

Now, here is the point; if the switch to the computer is turned off, and even if the power cord is pulled from its electrical source, the memory of what I placed in it is not lost. Simply, the computer screen goes dark, and we could say, the computer sleeps. In fact, when I shut down my computer, it tells me it is going to sleep. When I awaken my computer from its “sleep,” it comes back to life with all the memory it had before it went to sleep. The same thing applies to the flash drives, only they have no power source of their own; they must rely on the power given to the computer. We could say they sleep until the computer awakens them.

Do you see the parallel with man being put to sleep (death) by God? If man could create a machine that sleeps and yet retains all its memory, which is a mere reflection of the One who gave man such genius; then do you not think that God could and does do the same thing when His created being called *man* falls asleep? God is spirit, and it is the spirit that gives life. It is like the memory chip of a computer or a flash drive; both require an external power source and when it is activated, they come to life and do exactly what they were designed to do. Nothing is lost! If man can do such a thing, do we not see that *Yahweh Elohim*, who is far greater than man, can do likewise, even greater things?

When God turns on the switch of life, the person comes back into being, and the memory and character of who he is returns, to the praise of God; nothing is lost. However, not to be outdone by the creative ability of man, God does something far greater for the believer. When the switch of life is turned on in resurrection, the believer is transfigured into the body of His (Son's) glory, conformed to the image of the Son. Think about! We will not lose our individuality of who we are (we could say, how God wired us with temperament and the like); we will be changed into what God always intended us to be. Paul has left us an encouraging word on the matter, as presented in several translations.

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

For at present we are observing by means of a mirror, in an enigma, yet then, face to face. At present I know out of an installment, yet then I shall recognize according as I am recognized also. (1 Corinthians 13.12 CV)

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13.12 KJV)

For the present we see things as if in a mirror, and are puzzled; but then we shall see them face to face. For the present the knowledge I gain is imperfect; but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (1 Corinthians 13.12 WNT)

Dear brethren, God knows all of us, that is, each and every one that has ever been created, the unrighteous and the righteous, the lost and the saved, the unbeliever and the believer. Our knowledge is partial, incomplete. We only see through a glass darkly, and what we see leaves us without all the facts; some of it remains a puzzle to us. But God knows all and He knows all of us. Because of this, we can take comfort that our *God is love*, and in the end, when He is *All in all*, love will remain, for it is the greatest of all (see 1 Corinthians 13.13).

When the switch of life is turned on for all mankind, each in its own era, love will remain!

Death is a return.

Next for our consideration is the thought that death is likened to a return.

And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked **I shall return there**. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1.21 NASB)

In ancient times, Job saw death as a return; but today, it seems that a majority of people, believer and unbeliever alike, believe that death is a separation to another state of consciousness. Consequently, many hold the belief that at death man simply separates from his body, which goes into the ground, and the rest of the man goes to another place of consciousness. The American entertainment industry helps this view along with its many movies and television programs portraying life after death.

However, according to Scripture, death is a return to a prior *state* (or condition), not to a prior *place*. If it were a return to a prior state or place, it would follow that man would have some knowledge of this prior life. But who among men has any knowledge of a prior life, or can claim such a thing? Perhaps the pagan spiritists will make such a claim, but why should we listen to or believe ones who hold to doctrines of demons?

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

To understand the return, we need to understand that man was created spirit, soul and body. Paul clearly tells us so.

Now may the God of peace Himself be hallowing you wholly; and may your unimpaired **spirit and soul and body** be kept blameless in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Thessalonians 5.23 cv)

The breath of the spirit of the living.

When He formed man, God took soil (not dust, as often translated) from the ground and formed the first man.

So then Yahweh God formed man of the dust [soil] of the ground, and breathed in his nostrils **the breath of life**—and man became **a living soul**. (Genesis 2.7 REB [CV])

And forming is Ieue Alueim [Yahweh Elohim] the human of soil from the ground, and He is blowing into his nostrils **the breath of the living**, and becoming is the human a living soul. (Genesis 2.7 CV [TSS])

It was the body that was first formed, and this is what Scripture calls *man* or the human. *Yahweh Elohim formed the man*, even before he had breath. God then breathed into the nostrils of the lifeless form of man to fill his lungs with oxygenated air and give him the breath of life, the breath of the living.

The spirit is not mentioned directly in the account of Adam's creation; nevertheless, the breath and the spirit can be synonymous. It is the spirit that gives life (see e.g., John 6.63; Romans 8.6, 10; James 2.26).

Many people incorrectly believe that only man has a spirit and a soul, but this is not according to Scripture. Life imparted to every living creature, including man, is described as the breath of the spirit of the living. It is the breath of the spirit that enters the nostrils and gives animation to the body. We first see this in the account of the great deluge in Noah's day.

And expiring is all flesh moving on the earth..., and every human. Everyone which has the breath of **the spirit of the living in his nostrils**, of all that were in the drained areas, dies. (Genesis 7.21-22 cv; also see Exodus 15.8; 2 Samuel 22.16; Job 4.9; 27.3; Psalm 18.15; 104.29)

Referring to all the living things in the sea and on the land, the Psalmist declared: *You conceal Your face; they are filled with panic. You gather away their spirit; they breathe their last and return to their soil. You send forth Your spirit; they are created, and You renew the face of the ground* (Psalm 104.29-30 cv).

Solomon wrote: For as regardeth the destiny of the sons of men and the destiny of the beasts one fate have they, as dieth the one so dieth the other, and *one spirit*

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

have they all,—and the pre-eminence of man over beast is nothing, for all were vanity: all go unto one place, ***all came from the dust*** [soil], and ***all return to the dust*** [soil]. Who knoweth *the spirit of the sons of men*, whether it ascendeth above,—or ***the spirit of the beast***, whether it descendeth below to the earth? (Ecclesiastes 3.19-21 REB).

So, it is made very clear that when God breathes into His creatures that are formed of the soil of the ground, He blows the breath of the spirit into their nostrils, and they become alive. God gives His creatures spirit to give them life, and He takes away spirit to end their life. James affirmed this: *the body without the spirit is dead* (James 2.26).

Each group of living beings has its own form (see 1 Corinthians 15.38-41), and thus its own spirit. Paul asked: For is any of humanity acquainted with that which is human except *the spirit of humanity* which is in it? Thus also, that which is of God no one knows, except *the spirit of God* (1 Corinthians 2.11 cv). In other words, man has his own distinct spirit, apart from all other creatures and God Himself. Thus, the life of the human body is dependent on the breath of the spirit, and this is given and taken away directly by God. Isaiah declared that God is the *Giver of breath to the people thereon, and of spirit to them who walk therein* (Isaiah 42.5 REB).

Given what Scripture says about the breath of the spirit, it is difficult to hold to the common teaching that Adam's spirit died when he disobeyed God. If his spirit had died, he would have died on the spot, which according to God's word did not happen. Further, his spirit could not have gone into some state of dormancy, for it is the essence of mankind; that is, it is the very identity and life of man. Surely, the soul of Adam became the more dominant driving force in his life; nevertheless, the spirit was still part of Adam's being, which after 930 years returned to the Creator.

Spiritual separation from the life.

Now, although Adam's spirit obviously did not die, there was nevertheless an obvious change in the relationship between Adam and God when Adam disobeyed God's command, and this change had to occur in the realm of the spirit. Perhaps God's spirit was removed from Adam. We know that when we were dead in our transgressions, we did not have the spirit of God, but when we first believed, God placed His spirit in us. Surely, the reverse must have occurred with Adam since he was in communion with God prior to his one transgression. He lost intimate communion with God because he no longer had God's spirit, but he retained the spirit of life that had been breathed into him. However, in spite of the first transgression, God never stopped talking to or revealing Himself to Adam, or to mankind that followed. If He had, then mankind would have never known anything of God, and we would not have Scripture to study today.

Although the emphasis of this chapter is on physical death, we need to keep in mind that death, whether in the physical or spiritual sense, is a separation from

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

life. Spiritually speaking, anyone who is not in Christ today is dead to God today. It is a present condition. *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life* (1 John 5.12^{NASB}). Until the spirit of God reveals Christ to man and he is placed in Christ and given the spirit of God, man is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2.1), even though he might be physically alive. God is spirit, and man without God's spirit residing within is dead. How else can man be in fellowship, communion and love with God? How else can man appraise that which is truly spiritual? He must be alive *in* spirit.

We see proof of this principle throughout Scripture. For instance, the prodigal son was dead and came to life again; he was lost but was found (Luke 15.24). The father considered his son as dead because he had left his presence and sought after the world. God sees mankind in the same way. Further, consider Paul's exhortation to the Romans.

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but **the mind set on the Spirit is life** and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8.6-9^{NASB})

Notice how Paul contrasted life and death. The mind set on the flesh is death. What is the remedy? The mind set on the spirit is life and peace. Man must have the spirit of Christ to have life or, we could say, to live *in* spirit. In this sense, the word *death* has far greater meaning than the physical process of dying that leads to the cessation of life or physical death. It is not only a state in which the process of dying leads to the one event, physical death, but also a condition, separation from God that is a present death. When man is separated from God in spirit, he is dead or separated from God, who alone possesses life.

The point is this: Adam sinned and death passed through into all mankind. Mankind became a dying race that was spiritually separated from the very source of life, God; the only source that can and, ultimately, will give immortality to man, which is life beyond death— a life in spirit, no longer separated from God.

Consequently, we need to understand and appreciate death, both physically and spiritually, in our quest for the truth regarding God's purpose of the eons, which is only accomplished one way, and that is through and in His Son.

The living soul.

Now, what about the creation of the soul? The body is formed out of the ground, and the soul is simply a byproduct of the combination of the body and the spirit. The soul cannot exist apart from the body and the spirit, for it is the outcome of the body being given life through the breath of the spirit of life. In other words, the

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

soul is not given by God like the spirit and the body; it comes forth as the result of the combination of the spirit and the body. Thus, when man was given the breath of the spirit of life, he became *a living soul*.⁴ Also, note that man did not become a living spirit. In Scripture, man is not called a spirit. New creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5.17; Galatians 6.15) are *spiritual* and they will have *spiritual bodies* in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15.44).

Right from the beginning, man is said to be *a living soul*, not an immortal soul or a living spirit, but a living soul. In fact, according to Scripture, every living creature is considered a living soul (see Genesis 1.20, 21, 24, 30; 2.19; 9.3, 4, 8-10, 12; Revelation 8.9; 16.3 cv).

The soul only comes into being when life is breathed into the body.⁵ The spirit is related to the breath of life, for it is the force or energy that comes from God, which vitalizes the body, producing the soul, as we know it.^{6 7}

As such, the soul has no life apart from the spirit and the body. The body is formed by God; He then breathes the spirit of life into the body; then soul comes forth. Thus, the concept of soul cannot exist apart from the spirit of life and the body. It did not exist prior to the body, and it does not exist after the body. The soul of the flesh is in the blood; remove the blood and the soul is removed.

And every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, that eateth any manner of blood,—I will set my face against the soul that hath eaten blood, and will cut him off from among his people; for **the soul of the flesh is in the blood**; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atone-ment for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. (Leviticus 17.10-11 DNT)

⁴ In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for *soul* (*nephesh*) is used 754 times and is translated using 30 different English words or expressions. In the Greek Scriptures, the word for *soul* (*psuche*) is used 105 times and is translated using 7 different English words or expressions. For this reason, it may be difficult, using most English translations, for the casual reader to discern the true nature of the soul.

⁵ Consider what Scripture associates with or ascribes to the soul: *knowledge* (Joshua 23.14; Psalm 139.14; Proverbs 2.10; 19.2); *thought* (Esther 4.13; Psalm 13.2; Proverbs 23.7); *memory* (Deuteronomy 4.9; 11.18; Lamentations 3.20); *love, joy and delight* (Deuteronomy 6.5; 13.3; Psalm 35.9; 86.4; 94.19; Matthew 22.37); *hunger, thirst and desire* (Deuteronomy 12.20; 14.26; 1 Samuel 23.20; Psalm 42.1; Proverbs 13.4; 27.7; Isaiah 26.9; 29.8); *affliction by abstinence from work* (Leviticus 16.29, 31; 23.27-30); *affliction by fasting* (Psalm 35.13; Isaiah 58.3); *affliction by vows that bind* (Numbers 30.2, 13); *bitterness, distress and impatience* (Genesis 42.21; Numbers 21.4; Judges 10.16; 16.16; 1 Samuel 1.10; 22.2; 30.6; Psalm 143.11; Proverbs 21.23); *mourning, sorrow, grieving* (1 Samuel 2.33; Job 14.22; Psalm 42.5; Jeremiah 31.25); *abhorrence and hate* (Leviticus 26.15; Psalm 11.5; 107.18; Isaiah 1.14); *destructive expressions* (Genesis 23.8; 1 Samuel 19.5; 20.4; 28.21; 2 Kings 9.15; Psalm 41.2; 119.109).

⁶ Adam was created and all that follow are procreated. Our bodies are formed in the womb and not from the soil, as was Adam's; however, we have the same components that come from the soil.

⁷ The argument can be made that we do not have a soul; but rather we have soul, referring to consciousness, feelings and desires.

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

Some people see the spirit and the soul as one, but this thinking is not supported by Scripture, which states that man has a spirit and a soul, along with a body. In fact, Scripture parts the soul and spirit.

For the word of God is living and operative, and keen above any two-edged sword, and penetrating up to **the parting of soul and spirit**, both of the articulations and marrow, and is a judge of the sentiments and thoughts of the heart. (Hebrews 4.12 cv)

Today, with much emphasis throughout Christendom on activities and feelings, many believers mistakenly see many things that are manifested through the soul as coming from spiritual power. Loud and frenzied singing, dancing up a dust storm, wailing on a wall, beating one's chest, barking like dogs or laughing uncontrollably may seem spiritual, but these things are simply manifestations of the soul. It is *sensuality* and not *spirituality*. It is *soul power* and not *spirit power*.

Soul—sensation, human experience.

In our quest for truth, it is vital that we understand what the soul is as presented in Scripture. Studying all references to the word *soul* will reveal that the soul is the *consciousness, feelings* and *desires* of man that come about when the breath of life vitalizes the body at birth. As a living soul, Adam began to see, smell, hear, taste and feel. He was *animated*. Another way of putting it is that the soul consists of the sensations and feelings that man experiences.

Another way of stating this is that it is simply *the human experience*. One commentator has described the soul as *a phenomenon* and *a capacity*. In a sense, we do not have a soul but a capacity of soul or capacity to sense or have sensation. Often, man is described as a soul, referring to life itself, but this is not technically accurate. Although it is intimately connected to life and at times seems synonymous with life in Scripture, the soul is not life per se, but the experience of life as experienced through the sensations and the feelings of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling. Let us not forget that the spirit gives life (John 6.63; 2 Corinthians 3.6), not the soul.

As a phenomenon, the soul is the perception of the senses of the body and encompasses all the sensations of any living, organic body, whether it be man or any living creature. In other words, the soul is not unique to mankind. The soul is in the blood, and blood is found in every living creature that roams the earth (Leviticus 11.46). God's principles are laid down in the book of beginnings, Genesis, where we discover that every living creature is a living soul.

And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of **living souls**, and let fowl fly above the earth in the expanse of the heavens. And God created the great sea monsters, and every living soul that moves with which the waters swarm, after their kind, and every winged fowl after its kind. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1.20-21 DNT)

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

And out of the ground Jehovah Elohim had formed every animal of the field and all fowl of the heavens, and brought them to Man, to see what he would call them; and whatever Man called each **living soul**, that was its name. (Genesis 2.19 DNT)

Anyone who has spent any time around animals, particularly domesticated ones, can attest to them having souls. For example, there is little doubt that dogs have souls. They crave food; they desire shelter; they desire warmth and love; and they can become depressed or they can be jubilant, just as humans can and do. In fact, pet dogs often seem to take on some of the character of their owners.

There are many Scriptures to support the notion that the soul is connected with the senses. Consider the words of our Lord Jesus: Because of this, I say to you, do not be anxious *for your soul*, what you eat and what you drink, nor for your body, what you put on. Is not *the soul* more than the food and the body than clothing? (Matthew 6.25 LITV). Or consider the Lord's invitation to those feeling the pressures and burdens of life: Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for *your souls* (Matthew 11.29 WNT). It is the soul that feels these pressures and needs to rest in His yoke.

Further, consider these verses that connect the soul with the senses: With all the yearning of your *soul* you may sacrifice and eat flesh (Deuteronomy 12.15); you may eat grapes to your *soul's* desire, to your satisfaction (Deuteronomy 23.24); their *soul* abhorred all food (Psalm 107.18); a thief when he steals, in order to fill his *soul's* needs when he is famishing (Proverbs 6.30); The just man knows the *soul's* needs of even his domestic beast, yet the compassions of the wicked are cruel (Proverbs 12.10); eating to his *soul's* satisfaction (Proverbs 13.25); honey of the comb, is sweet to the *soul* and healing to the bones (Proverbs 16.24); if you are a person of *soulish* appetite (Proverbs 23.2); The *soul* that is surfeited tramples on honeycomb, yet to the famished *soul*, any bitter thing is sweet (Proverbs 27.7); cause his *soul* to see good from his toil (Ecclesiastes 2.24); All of a man's toil is for his mouth, yet even then the *soul* is never filled (Ecclesiastes 6.7); to make the *soul* of the famished empty (Isaiah 32.6).

Now, if death is a return, the question arises as to where do the spirit, soul and body return upon death? The answer is that they return from whence they came. At death, the spirit returns to God who gave it, the soul returns to the unseen, and the body returns to the soil.

The spirit returns.

The life must be taken from the body first. In other words, when one dies, he expires, or he breathes out his last breath. Consequently, the spirit of the breath of life departs and returns to God who gave it.

Also of that which is high they are afraid, and of the low places in the way, and the almond-tree is despised, and the grasshopper is become a burden,

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

and want is increased, for man is going unto his home age-during [eonian], and the mourners have gone round through the street. While that the silver cord is not removed, and the golden bowl broken, and the pitcher broken by the fountain, and the wheel broken at the well. And the **dust [soil] returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth to God who gave it.** (Ecclesiastes 12.5-7 YLT [CV])

Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. **His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;** in that very day **his thoughts perish.** (Psalm 146.3-4 NASB)

We had no consciousness of spirit before we were born, and we have no consciousness of spirit *in* death. It simply returns to God, who keeps it until the day of resurrection, at which point we will be reunited with our spirit when our Lord Jesus will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory (Philippians 3.21 cv).

The body returns.

With the spirit of the breath of life gone from the body, the body has no life to energize it, and it begins to decay back to the soil of the earth. What was once a highly specialized organism dissolves back into the soil. The body came from the soil of the ground, and to the soil it returns. This was God's declaration to Adam.

And to the human He says, "As you hearken to the voice of your wife, and are eating from the tree of which alone I instruct you, saying not eat shall you from it, cursed shall be the ground when you serve it, for your sakes. In grief shall you eat of it all the days of your lives. And thorns and weeds shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herbage of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat your bread, till **you return to the ground,** for from it are you taken, **for soil you are, and to soil are you returning.**" (Genesis 3.17-19 cv)

Consider what Job and Solomon had to say on the matter.

Remember I pray thee that as the clay thou didst make me, and **unto dust [soil] thou wilt cause me to return.** (Job 10.9 REB [CV])

Expire doth all flesh together, and **man to dust [soil] returneth.** (Job 34.15 YLT [CV])

"Can anyone teach God knowledge, in that He judges those on high? One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and satisfied; his sides are filled out with fat, and the marrow of his bones is moist, while another dies with a bitter soul, never even tasting anything good. **Together they lie down in the dust [soil], and worms cover them.**" (Job 21.22-26 NASB [CV])

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

For **the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same**. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. **All go to the same place. All came from the dust [soil] and all return to the dust [soil]**. (Ecclesiastes 3.19-20 NASB [CV])

Also, David cried out: *What gain is there in my blood poured out, in my descending to the grave? Does **soil** acclaim You? Does it tell of Your faithfulness?* (Psalm 30.12 cv). Soil refers to the body returning to dust (soil).

The soul returns.

Now, what about the soul? With life no longer energizing or animating the body, the soul ceases, for there is no *consciousness*, no *feelings* and no *desires*.⁸ It is essential to keep in mind that the soul has no place apart from a living body. Thus, the soul has no place to go once the body returns to the soil. There is no consciousness of the soul before birth, and there is no consciousness *in* death. It returns to silence. Scripture never presents the soul as being immortal. The fact of the matter is that the soul can be destroyed and killed. Scripture also does *not* teach that, *in* death, the soul goes to a place such as heaven or paradise. It declares that the soul goes to the unseen or unperceivable, to silence.

For You shall not forsake my soul in **the unseen**; You shall not allow Your benign one to see corruption. (Psalm 16.10 cv)

O Yahweh, You have brought my soul up from **the unseen**; You have preserved me alive from descending to the crypt. That my soul may sing praises to You and **not be silent** (Psalm 30.3 CV/NASB)

Like the flock, they are set for the unseen; death, it shall graze on them. Surely Elohim, He shall ransom my soul from the hand of **the unseen**. (Psalm 49.14, 15 cv)

For Your benignity over me is great, and you have rescued my soul from **the unseen** beneath. (Psalm 86.13 cv)

What master could live and not see death? Could his soul escape from the hand of **the unseen**? (Psalm 89.48 cv)

In going to the unseen, the soul is associated with the body in going to the grave.

⁸ For those who are interested in studying the soul, consider these verses: *man is called "a soul"* (Genesis 12.5; 14.21; 46.26; Exodus 12.4, 15, 16); *the soul is in the blood* (Genesis 9.3, 4, 5, 6; Leviticus 17.11, 14); *the soul can die* (Leviticus 19.28; 21.1; 24.17, 18; Numbers 23.10; 31.19; Joshua 2.13; Job 36.14; Psalm 22.20; 33.19; 78.50; 116.8; Isaiah 53.11; Jeremiah 15.9; Ezekiel 13.19); *the soul can be destroyed and killed* (Numbers 31.19; Deuteronomy 19.11; Joshua 11.11; Ezekiel 22.27; Acts 3.23); *the soul can be taken away* (1 Kings 19.1-4, 10; Psalm 31.13); *the soul can be emptied or poured* (Isaiah 53.12; Psalm 141.8).

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

For gratuitously have they buried their net for me; gratuitously have they delved **a grave for my soul.** (Psalm 35.7 cv)

Yet Thou are attached to my soul, **to keep it from ruin of decay** [corruption, ruin].... (Isaiah 38.17 cv)

The soul also goes into silence or stillness.

Unless Yahweh were my Help, soon my soul would tabernacle in **stillness.** (Psalm 94.17 cv)

The dead cannot praise Yah, nor any that go down into **silence.** (Psalm 115.17 REB)

In all these verses, there is no mention of activity in death on the part of the soul. It departs to a state of silence, not a place. It departs to the unseen. Does this sound like heaven or a place of bliss? Of course not! ⁹

Thus, death is a complete dissolution and unconsciousness, and a return to the original state in which the elements existed before they were united to make man a living soul. Paul is often misquoted to prove just the opposite of this, but consider what he said as his life neared its end: For I am already a libation, and the period of *my dissolution* is imminent (2 Timothy 4.6 cv). Many translations use the word *departure* to imply he was merely departing this world, but the correct rendering is dissolution, which means “up-loosing” or “disintegration, end, termination.” Paul the person was coming to an end, not going on to a new place. Paul never taught the concept of life *in* death. The whole foundation of Paul’s expectation is based on the resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15). Ignore the resurrection and there is no hope for the believer or, ultimately, for all mankind.

Christ’s death.

All that has been presented should be enough proof of the true nature of death; however, the death of our Lord Jesus is the final proof and verification of all Scripture that has been presented.

He committed His spirit to God and He expired; He died.

And shouting with a loud voice, Jesus said, “Father, into Thy hands **am I committing My spirit.**” Now, saying this, He expires. (Luke 23.46 cv)

His soul went to the unseen, but it was not forsaken, that is, not left in the unseen beyond the three days.

⁹ In a sense, we could say that the soul merely ceases to be. It returns to the unseen in the sense that it did not exist prior to the body, and it will not exist with the dissolution of the body.

THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER

For Thou wilt not be forsaking **my soul in the unseen**, nor wilt Thou be giving Thy Benign One to be acquainted with decay. (Acts 2.27 cv)

His body was placed in the tomb and did not see decay, for it was roused after three days and nights.

Now, evening coming on, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself also is a disciple of Jesus. He, coming to Pilate, requests the body of Jesus. Then Pilate orders the body to be given up. And, getting **the body**, Joseph folds it up in a clean linen wrapper and **places it in his new tomb** which he quarries in the rock. And, rolling a large stone on to the door of the tomb, he came away. (Matthew 27.57-60 cv)

For even as Jonah was in the bowel of the sea monster three days and three nights, thus will the Son of Mankind be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. (Matthew 12.40 cv)

Praise God; the tomb could not hold Him and after three days and nights, Jesus' spirit returned, His body was raised from its repose, and His soul came alive. He was not forsaken or left in the unseen or in the tomb. He saw no decay of His body. He was seen by many as proof of His resurrection, and then He ascended in a body into a cloud to return to His Father in heaven to sit at His right hand.

Now, answering, the messenger said to the women, "Fear you not! For I am aware that you are seeking Jesus, the Crucified. He is not here, for He was roused, according as He said. Hither! Perceive the place where the Lord lay. And, swiftly going, say to His disciples that He was roused from the dead, and lo! He is preceding you into Galilee. There you will see Him. Lo! I told you!" (Matthew 28.5-7 cv)

Now he is saying to them, "Be not overawed! Jesus are you seeking, the Nazarean, the Crucified. He was roused! He is not here! Perceive the place where they place Him!" (Mark 16.6 cv)

For I give over to you among the first what also I accepted, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day according to the scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, thereupon by the twelve. (1 Corinthians 15.3-5 cv)

Just in case there is any doubt that Jesus actually and factually died, that is, went into a state of sleep (unconsciousness) just as all human beings do, consider Jesus' own testimony to John, as recorded in the Revelation of Jesus Christ: "*Do not fear! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One: and I became dead, and lo! living am I for the eons of the eons*" (Revelation 1.17-18 cv). Christ became dead!

Jesus died and was roused from among the dead to the glory of God the Father.

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE EONS

Do not believe Satan's lie.

Those who continue to hold that the soul does not die but is immortal, or that death is merely a portal to another life, need to be reminded of the words of Satan, the father of lies, when he approached Eve, challenging God's warning to Adam: *Not to die shall you be dying!* (Genesis 3.4 cv). In other words, the lie is that man cannot die, and he will never die, even if he dies.

This is the lie that has been embraced by the pagans, presented to us in carnal movies that come out of an entertainment industry that is antichrist and, sadly, has been believed throughout Christendom, even in our day. ¹⁰

God will bring.

Let us take comfort that for our brethren that have fallen asleep in Christ (and us one day) are safe and secure as they sleep in Christ under the watchful eye of God the Father. We do not have to fear what has happened to them in death, for we know that their spirits have returned to God, who gave them in the first place. Paul taught the Thessalonians that when the day of resurrection comes, *God will bring the ones having fallen asleep through [fig., having died in] Jesus with Him* (1 Thessalonians 4.14 ALT).

For many of us, when we were children, our parents would put us to sleep at night, and we felt safe and secure knowing that they were watching over us. We went to bed without any fear or anxiety that we were in danger as we slept, or that we might not wake up in the morning and see their faces again. How much greater is our safety and security knowing that, when we are asleep in Jesus, our heavenly Father, the Supreme of the universe, is watching over us and keeping us for that glorious day when we will enter the presence of His Son, our Lord and Savior. God the Father will preserve our spirits as we sleep and will bring our spirits back when we are resurrected and transfigured into the body of His [the Son's] glory.

Let us be comforted; death is a return and a sleep, and the way out of sleep is through resurrection, in the twinkling of an eye, which is in accord with the purpose of the eons.

Most of all, let us hold to what Scripture teaches—***The dead know nothing whatsoever!***

¹⁰ Interestingly, there are people who claim that they have had “near-death experiences.” Their body dies, and they have various experiences, such as seeing white lights or figures clothed in white light. Some even claim that they see themselves outside of their body. Unfortunately, many believers accept such claims as evidence that there is life immediately after death, and the figure in white light is Jesus, even though many who make this claim do not believe in Jesus. However, recent scientific studies have produced some evidence that these near-death experiences are the result of certain chemical/neurological differences in some individuals. In other words, what they experience is not something spiritual but something biological. We must be reminded that pagan religions believe in life *in* death, and these beliefs have crept into Christendom.