

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

PART V



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Question #16 - *“Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death? Then Jesus comes at the end of time and takes the soul home to heaven.”*

In our last segment we talked about how God uses death as a way to truly save us from our sins, and how this shows us we are not truly saved or born again until that day we are given an incorruptible form by God. This also explains why we continue to experience such things as sickness, and distress of all sorts even while attempting to live for God in the here and now. All this moved us into a discussion about some of the false ideas of men and what they tell us happens after death. Discussing what actually does happen to us is what we are going to get into in this segment of “A Matter Of Life And Death.”

When Adam and Eve sinned, God told them they were made from dust, and death would return that part of them, which was made from the earth, back to the earth. (Gen. 3:19) Once man dies there is no hope for his physical form, and this is what Job was talking about in Job 14:7-12. A tree or plant may have hope of life again after the death of its body. If there is a piece of the root which has life in it, a tree might put forth a new sprout much like it did at the very beginning of its existence and grow

back to be very large. Man does not have that hope. When he dies, he dies because of some form of physical injury or deterioration. After death, this only gets worse and worse until the body is no longer recognizable as a human body. It does not even matter that there is a part of humans which lives on. Man has no ability, nor is there any hope, no matter how long you may preserve his physical form, to raise it up again or start over in some way. When the breath is gone, it's gone. The physical form is done, and the rest is in God's hands alone!

Now, Job does use the idea of sleep in what he says, but this is because he understands there is more to us than just the body, and he is making his statement in the same context as Nicodemus. Job had not seen The Messiah's work. Job was only mulling over what he knew, and that is: in spite of the fact man is more than just flesh, the cold hard facts of life is that the physical form dies and is no more. Because of this, no one, no matter how much they served The Lord, came back from the dead. Job did not know exactly where those parts which are not of the body went, but he knew they were not coming back to be with the body!

Nicodemus asked about entering a mother's womb when Jesus told him people had to be born again to see the Kingdom of God, because Nicodemus could not see how man could physically gain life a second time. He also knew the body was a lost cause after death, and without the physical process we all know as the beginning of our lives, how else would the body be replaced? For all our attempts to take care of our bodies or find foods which bring longevity, people still die. For all our attempts to raise the dead with potions, enchantments, magic, or the like, for all our care of the body after death, people just don't come back! The only way anyone besides Jesus has ever come back from death is by the power of God doing what He did at creation, which is also why everyone except Jesus died again.

The answer to the question we are dealing with in this writing of, “Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death?” is simply yes! The mind and the spirit are no longer in any way connected to the body after death. Death is not a sleep, nor is it a coma, of sorts. Once the physical form has lost the ability to sustain itself, or be sustained even by outside help,

such as we do with many modern life support systems, it is over, and all which is not physical is detached. Once the body is truly dead, there is no more reason for us to be attached to our physical form than to any other piece of this physical universe. Our bodies are dust, and this truth becomes more and more apparent with every moment which passes after death. Also, because we no longer have a physical form which belongs to this world and the materials it consists of, we no longer have any connection to this universe which God created in Genesis 1:1. This, as we have been discussing, is the beautiful fact which allows God to turn the sting of death and the grave into a victory! (I Cor. 15:55-57)

Now, some might be tempted to argue that I myself, in this very writing, have made it a point that the tomb of Jesus was opened so we could see He was no longer there, and that included His body. This is true, but this is the difference between being raised from the dead and being born again. Remember, two main points. First, Jesus was perfect. He never sinned. The devil tried to get Him to, but Jesus never did. (Heb. 4:14-15) This brings us to another one of those odd thoughts many Christians have. Many Christians believe the devil celebrated when Jesus died, but why would he? Once Jesus was dead, and still without sin, the devil lost all opportunity to touch Jesus. The devil is not the ruler of the place we like to call "hell." Hell is the place God prepared for the devil and those angels which followed him, and it is a place of eternal punishment. (Matt. 25:41)

While the devil and his cohorts wait to be sent to that place of eternal punishment, they are here in this universe. Without getting off on a whole study about angels and demons, and the argument as to why this is possible when we do not see angels as having physical forms, let's just remember, angels were not created in the same way humans were. At the same time, this does have relationship to why demons (which are only angels who rebelled against God) do seek out something physical to "possess." All this is why the legion of demons possessing the man who lived among the tombs, in the country of the Gadarenes, cried out to Jesus, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matthew 8:29 These demons knew there was/is a set time for them to be

sent into eternal punishment. However, they knew Who they were in the presence of, and they were afraid Jesus would send them to that place as Jesus cast them out of the man. That is why they requested to be allowed to go into the herd of swine.

What the Bible tells us is that here in this world we need to, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:11-12 Jesus living in this world in flesh which was able to be corrupted, which is proven by the fact Jesus was able to be killed on the cross, was the devil's only chance to destroy God Himself! Never before and never again has the devil had such an opportunity; but once Jesus died, never having sinned even once, that all came to an end! Because Jesus was perfect, he did not deserve the judgment of death; yet not only had He died, it was truly the sin of other men which caused His death. This is why Jesus was raised, not in like flesh as He had had before His death, but He was - for lack of a better term - transformed into a new incorruptible form. Sin would no longer be able to kill Him or touch Him in any way!

This is a major point, and one which we should try to grasp. Jesus came, not just to show us God can resurrect the dead. He already did that with men such as Lazarus. The story tells us Jesus specifically waited for Lazarus to not only die before He came to Lazarus' house, but Jesus held off coming so Lazarus would be in the grave for awhile. Jesus wanted there to be no doubt that Lazarus was not just in a coma, or the like. Lazarus was - as we say - stone dead, and by the time Jesus comes and tells them to roll the stone away from the tomb, Lazarus' sister even points out that is really not something one would want to do. Her fear was that surely by that time Lazarus' body stunk! Jesus not only had the stone rolled away, in spite of this warning, but caused Lazarus to come out of that tomb alive, and still bandaged in his burial cloths, just to prove it was truly the same man! (John 11)

The point is: at any time God can animate, or reanimate, any part of this universe with the power

of life, just as He did at creation. In doing this, He can also place the mind and the spirit back in a reanimated body, which is what He did with Lazarus. As amazing as this is, Jesus would be raised differently. Because of His perfection, Jesus' actual body would be transformed into a new form which would never be able to die, be killed, or corrupted! The scripture even specifically points out that Jesus' body, which died on that cross, would not be left in the grave to deteriorate and stink as Lazarus' had. On the day of Pentecost, Peter quotes this fact, prophesied by David in the sixteenth Psalm. "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Acts 2:25-27 He says, "...my flesh shall rest in hope:..." not because his flesh will be resurrected, but because of Christ's work, he as an individual can die, leaving the flesh behind, without worry or concern for what will happen to those parts still alive.

Our second point about Jesus' body, which goes hand in hand with the one we just covered, is the fact Jesus' body was not made from this world! Remember all that stuff about how we are made an individual because our parents shared a part of their life in order to form ours? Well, that did not happen with Jesus. A lot of Christians like to go on about Mary being the mother of Jesus, and this too has connection, as so many things do, to religious practices outside of Christianity. These things have to do with worshiping the flesh, and that is why a most prominent thing in ancient religions, the world over, is the worship of fertility. Worshiping fertility has a direct relationship to the fact, in man's heart of hearts, he understands life does not come from nonlife! That being said, we should also understand, Jesus did not come from Adam's life!

In a way, we are all Adam, but Jesus is not. Christians are clear on the fact Joseph was not truly Jesus' father. However, Mary was no more His mother! Neither of them provided anything to create Jesus' physical form. The Bible tells us Jesus was conceived by The Holy Ghost, and placed in Mary's

womb. (Matt. 1:18-21, Luke 1:30-35) Normal human conception takes male and female acting together, and conception takes place long before the new baby travels to the womb. God is not slack concerning His promises, nor the details of how serious He is that we live the life He created us to live! (II Pet. 3:9) Mary was an incubator only so Jesus could live life from the very moment of conception every human following Adam and Eve had lived from. Mary was not, in any way, genetically Jesus' mother!

Now, if we put these two facts together, we see the truth: Because He had no sin, Jesus' body could be resurrected without the corruption of personal sin. Because He was not of the line of Adam, He could be resurrected without the corruption of the sin of those who had come before Him. (I Cor. 15:45) Because these two facts are true, Jesus' actual body was resurrected! This gave Him the ability to walk this world, as well as the ability to leave it. Our bodies, on the other hand, cannot be resurrected in this same way; and contrary to classical human thought, it would be detrimental if we had to, in some form or another, drag these bodies, or any part of them, along with us after death. We will not stay the same, even if we are still living in these bodies at the time of Jesus' return, "...we shall be changed." I Corinthians 15:52 Jesus' body was truly resurrected, but He did not go through this process of death and resurrection so we could be raised like Lazarus and die again someday. Jesus did what He did so we could share in His resurrection, which only He could accomplish! (Rom. 6:5-10)

This is why we say The Messiah is the first fruits among many! However, the true heart of our question, which we want to get to and understand, is the fact that while Jesus was the first to be raised incorruptible, He was not the first to ever die. What about Noah, Job, Abraham, etc.? How could they be "saved"? These men had been dead for centuries, even millenniums before The Messiah ever came! If Jesus was the first, what happened to them? Again, if we do not raise immediately or just a day or two after death, what happens to us? This, in many ways, is what Nicodemus was wondering about, and what needs to be understood in order to answer the question we are dealing with in this writing!

Again, when death happens to these physical forms, everything which is not of the body - that being the mind and the spirit - leaves the body behind! After an individual dies, the rest of humanity goes on living and walking day by day in the time sequence God put in place during creation. This is why funerals are not for the dead; they are for the living. The person who has "passed on," knows nothing of what is going on, because they are no longer connected to this universe. This also means they are not looking down from above on what you are doing with their body or your life. In fact, the idea of the spirit and mind being unconscious after death - like a sleep - is a more appropriate thought than believing the soul is floating around watching what is going on.

The idea that our loved ones are looking down on us is another false thought which simply comes from fleshly-minded people. It's fascinating how much we complain about the hardships of this life, but still want to remain connected to this physical world even when we no longer have a physical body to connect us to it. For this, there is another interesting story from yet another ancient culture which is still given homage to in many cultures today. That story is the one of Jack and his lantern. The story says Jack was such a bad person, not only could he not get into heaven, but the devil didn't even want him in hell. The fact the devil does not have this authority is one we have already covered. However, that's how the story goes, and this shows us a truth we should remember, which is: even Satan does not want to be the devil. (II Cor. 11:14) Now, because Jack has no place to go, Jack was left in the darkness where he did not desire to remain. In this darkness, Jack somehow found the physical objects of a turnip, and a candle. He also somehow found the means to light the candle. Then he proceeds to hollow out the turnip and carve a scary face in it to ward off evil spirits along the way. (As if there could be a more evil spirit than the story tells us Jack was.) After doing all this, Jack puts the lit candle in the turnip and uses the turnip as a lantern. This lantern of Jack's - or Jack-o-lantern to be more culturally correct - Jack uses to find his way back to earth, which is an act that would require a physical path of some sort, even if he was able to float through space!

Unlike the Egyptian philosophy, this story is not really about being connected to one's physical body. However, one of its greatest values may be in that it shows us Ephesians 6:12 is true. Our true enemy in this world is not flesh and blood; and once again, we should remember the story of the demons who talked to Jesus. (Matt. 8:28-32) The story of Jack gives credit to the idea we lose our body upon death. Because Jack does not go to heaven, hell, or any place which would simply be a traditional holding place for the dead, it's more like the idea people have about their relatives and loved ones floating around. However, these kinds of philosophies have to do with being somehow connected to this physical realm and the ability to interact, or at least view what is going on here, without having a physical form.

People like to think there is a physical connection between this world and where we go upon death, or that we really never leave this physical realm at all. The Egyptians, and those who hold to grave sleeping, believe the connection is through that pile of dust which was our physical form. The story of Jack is about not having a body at all, but still being possible to manipulate physical objects! Either way, this is holding on to the hope that without the body it may be possible for the spirit and mind to hang around or get back to the here and now.

The truth of the matter is that the only forces able to hang around as invisible are those of the devil and his angels! We could go into this more deeply, but again, angels were not created like us, and the word "angel" simply denotes the fact they are God's messengers. This fact is why we often call those who are no longer serving God by that other word - "demon." Maybe the simplest way to put it is to say angels were created with different abilities. In the book of Job, we see Satan coming before God; and when asked where he has been, Satan replies he has been walking to and fro on the earth. (Job 1:6-7) This shows an ability to go from one place to the other. Humans were not created with this ability, nor were they created for this purpose. When we go to the book of Revelation, we find the dragon (which is Satan in representative form), along with the angels which followed him, were cast out of heaven and onto the earth. Satan, at that point, is trapped in our time sequence, and it is specifically pointed out that

he is very angry about the fact he has little time to work with. (Rev. 12:7-12) What makes Jack's story interesting is the fact it tells us only someone utterly evil would end up in Jack's predicament. This mirrors the truth the Bible tells us, and is the reason so many believe they should use jack-o-lanterns of their own - especially on certain nights of the year - to ward off the evil spirits which may not only find their way to this earth, but to your very door's threshold, where if you do not treat them, they will trick you!

The truth for humans goes back to our creation. God formed the human body out of the dust of this ground, then God breathed the breath of life into that body. The body is more than a shell; it's a part of us, and it's the part of us which connects us to this physical realm! This is why we need a Saviour, and not as some suggest - simply a "guide!" As we live here in the physical, we can do whatever we want within the bounds of what is physically possible. It is simply up to us. This is why God gave man the physical ability to make choices from the very start, by giving them the physical ability to take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as well as the Tree of Life. The body is why we can speak, see, hear, smell, and touch things. We lose all those abilities, when it comes to this physical place, when our bodies are gone. This is why those who have died are not looking down on you from above. They are not walking among you as invisible spirits. Man was made with a physical form for those purposes, and all those purposes also have to do with spending time!

Remember what I said about God dividing the light from the darkness during creation, and that being God creating time as we know it? Well, that is where the understanding comes! The physical realm is more than just a touchable, viewable place. It's also a place which regulates how we can take action, and what regulates us is that thing we call time! This entire, physical realm is what I like to call a fishbowl, of sorts. We may not understand exactly what exists outside of our fishbowl, but we have to live in it in order to function in the way we were created to function. This is precisely why, if we are going to leave this place, Jesus had to go and prepare a new place for us! God created us to live in a day and

night, one foot in front of another way, and to do this, you literally need to have feet. You also have to have a place to use those feet! In many ways, I think there is a part of every human which understands this whether we have taken the time to consider it or not. This is why people are comforted by the idea our soul may be able to lurk around here in some way whether conscious or not. We simply do not know where else it could go!

In our next segment we will talk about the possibilities of where we can go after death, and what this means to the dynamics of what happens to our mind and spirit upon the death of our physical form. This will lead us directly into the answer to our question. Until then, I pray you will grow in His assurance and comfort, as you prepare your life to meet The Lord at His return!

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