

Doctrines Of The Faith - A Study in Truth



What The Bible Says About...

THANATOLOGY

The Doctrine of Death

PASTOR ART KOHL



Thanatology

The Doctrine of Death

by Pastor Art Kohl

Scripture verses in this booklet are from the King James Holy Bible.

Doctrine of the Faith - A Study in Truth

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Thanatology

The Doctrine of Death

I. What Is Death?.....	1
II. Why Is There Death?	1
III. Who Has the Power of Death?	2
IV. Why Do Some Good Christians Die Young?	3
V. Why Do Some Bad Believers Die Young?	5
VI. What Happens When Babies Die?.....	7
VII. What Happen When Children Die?	8
VIII. What Happens to Miscarried/Aborted Babies?.....	9
IX. What Happened When Old Testament Saints Died?...	10
X. What Happened When Old Testament Sinners Died?..	12
XI. What Happens When New Testament Sinners Die?....	12
XII. What Happens When New Testament Saints Die?....	13
XIII. What Is the Second Death?.....	14
XIV. What About Reincarnation?.....	15
XV. Is There Another Chance After Death?	16
XVI. What About Limbo?	18
XVII. What About Organ Donation?	18
XVIII. Who Has the Keys of Death and Hell?	18
XIX. The Destruction of Death.....	19

I. What Is Death?

A. Death is the departure of the spirit from the body in humans and animals

“Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (James 2:26).

When the little maid came back to life, her spirit came back into her: “And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her **spirit** came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.” (Luke 8:53-55).

When Stephen was stoned to death, he gave up his spirit: “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59).

The phrase “gave up the ghost” is found ten times in Scripture. The word “ghost” comes from the same word that is translated “spirit.”

Notice the use of both words in Luke 23:46: “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my *spirit*: and having said thus, he gave up the *ghost*.”

B. Death is also the departure of the soul from a human

There are two invisible beings inside of us: a spirit and a soul. When Jesus died on the Cross, His spirit went to heaven (see Luke 23:46) and His soul went into hell (see Acts 2:27,31).

The spirit and soul are distinctly different and both leave the body at death: 1 Kings 17:21-22, “And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s **soul** come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the **soul** of the child came into him again, and he revived.”

Animals do not have souls, only humans do. Animals have spirits.

II. Why Is There Death?

A. God promised that man would die if disobedient to His commandment

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17).

B. Man disobeyed the law of God and sinned

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Genesis 3:6). “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4).

C. Death came by that sin

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have

sinned:” (Romans 5:12).

Man became corrupt because of Adam’s willing disobedience. That corrupted nature has been passed on down to all of us. We have become not only sinners by nature (birth), but also sinners by choice. Not just Adam, but all like him have chosen to sin.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (Romans 3:23). “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

And the wages of sin is death: “For the **wages of sin** is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23). “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Not only did death come to mankind by Adam’s sin, but the whole creation came under the curse of sin. This is why plants and animals get old, sick, and die.

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground** for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Genesis 3:17-19).

“For we know that **the whole creation** groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” (Romans 8:22).

Because death came by sin, the believer in the Lord must reject the theory of evolution or the gap theory. These teach that man, plants, and animals evolved after millions of years of life, death, and changes. The Bible teaches that death came after man sinned, not before.

III. Who Has The Power Of Death?

A. God has the power to put to death

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28). God has appointed that every person die and be judged someday. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” (Hebrews 9:27). “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31).

B. The Devil has the power of death

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” (Hebrews 2:14).

When the Lord puts someone to death, it is because of His righteous judgment and the guilt of their sin: “Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.” (Psalms 119:137). “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous

are thy judgments.” (Revelation 16:7). “For true and righteous are his judgments:” (Revelation 19:2a).

When the Devil kills it is because he is a heartless murderer. One of his greatest lusts is to kill. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning,” (John 8:44a).

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10).

Satan is the tempter behind wars, drunk driving deaths, abortions, murders, intentional starvation, genocide, homicide, ethnic cleansing, etc.

C. Man (appointed government) has the power of death

Though no man should be a murderer, mankind – in the sense of government ordained by God – must execute capital punishment upon the guilty.

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Genesis 9:6).

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” (Romans 13:1-5).

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.” (1 Peter 2:13-14). Even Jesus submitted to the Roman government in regards to capital punishment (though He was an innocent man). See John 19:10-11.

IV. Why Do Some Good Christians Die Young?

Like the Bible promises, the average life-span in America today is about seventy or eighty. The Bible says: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Psalms 90:10).

There is a time to be born and a time to die: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

Yet it seems that sometimes a good Christian dies well before the normal life expectancy. Why might this be?

A. Martyrdom

Millions of God's people have been killed for the faith. Men and women. Adults and children. Here are some examples:

1. **Abel** - "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." (Genesis 4:8).
2. **Zechariah** - "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD." (2 Chronicles 24:20-21). "From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation." (Luke 11:51).
3. **John the Baptist** - "And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison," (Mark 6:27).
4. **Stephen** - "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." (Acts 7:57-58).
5. **James** - "And he [King Herod] killed James the brother of John with the sword." (Acts 12:2).

Also remember: God watched His own Son die at the age of thirty-three.

B. To save them from the evil to come

"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." (Isaiah 57:1-2). God knows the future. We do not. Sometimes, to save someone from something evil, God – in His love –relocates them to Heaven. This great act of love on God's part is often hard to understand for humans looking at the situation from this side.

C. To be closer to God

"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:22-24). It appears that the birth of his son (Methuselah) caused Enoch to draw close to God. The birth of a child often "jolts" an adult from lethargy into reality. Enoch was about sixty-five years old when his son was born. This caused Enoch to grow close to God and walk with Him for the next three hundred years.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and

was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:5-6). Enoch had a testimony! He pleased God and God took him. Enoch did not die, but he is an example to us that God sometimes takes younger people to Himself. Death is not a penalty for the one walking righteously. It is a reward!

“For to me to live is Christ, and **to die is gain.**” (Philippians 1:21). “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is **far better.**” (Philippians 1:23). “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be **present with the Lord.**” (2 Corinthians 5:8). “**Precious** in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” (Psalms 116:15).

Most people in Enoch’s day lived to be nine hundred years old. Enoch was translated to heaven at the age of 365. He only lived about forty percent of his life. That would be like a man today living to the age of thirty. Missionary David Brainerd only lived to be 29, but his life still influences missionaries today, two hundred years later. The closer to God on earth, the closer to God in Heaven. Sometimes God loves fellowship with someone so much that the only way it can be closer is for God to take that person to Heaven. Such is the example of Enoch.

V. Why Do Some Bad Believers Die Young?

A. Overmuch wickedness

“Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?” (Ecclesiastes 7:17). Solomon sufficiently warns us here that a person who is overmuch wicked can die before his time. There is a divinely appointed time for each of us to die: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27). An unrepentant believer can move up that date on God’s calendar. God’s nature is to give people “space to repent” (Revelation 2:21). If one of His children persists in disobedience, He will remove that person so they cannot sin anymore. Any good parent “pulls their children in” when they are being bad. We call it being “grounded.”

B. No fruit

If a tree in an orchard does not bear fruit, it is removed and another tree is put in its place. Bearing fruit can save your life. Consider the parable of the barren fig tree: “He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” (Luke 13:6-9).

God demands results. If we do not produce, He will replace us with

someone who will. Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:” (John 15:16).

C. Chastisement

The ultimate chastisement of a believer is death. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:30-32).

In the Bible, the word “sleep” is often used synonymously with death. Here chastisement refers to a father’s correction of his children. This is why some believers are weak, some are sickly, and some sleep (die prematurely). The Lord chastens His children, but thankfully does not condemn them.

This is referring to the sleep of the body, not the sleep of the soul or spirit. As we have already seen, the spirit and soul never sleep. They go immediately upward to God or downward to hell. The body “sleeps” in the grave till the resurrection: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” (1 Corinthians 15:51).

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15).

D. Defiling the Temple of God

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

The word “defile” means “to ruin by immoral influence, to deprave.” The body is holy. It is the temple of God. It is not to be defiled. The believer needs to stay away from all vices: alcohol, illegal drugs, junk food, gluttony, sexual sins, cigarettes, etc.

E. Sin unto death

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” (1 John 5:16-17). Some sins are greater than others (John 19:11). Our position in Christ is eternally secure, but a great sin can lead to a person’s premature physical death. There are sins unto death. There are sins not unto death. Some examples of sins unto death:

1. For Achan, it was covetousness

“And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two

hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it... And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.” (Joshua 7:20-21, 25-26).

2. For Korah, it was the sin of rebellion against those in authority

“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:... And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.” (Numbers 16:1-2, 31-32).

3. For Ananias and Sapphira, it was lying to the Holy Spirit

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things... And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.” (Acts 5:1-5, 7-10).

There are other examples in Scripture where people came under immediate judgment from God because of a sin unto death.

VI. What Happens To Babies When They Die?

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? **I shall go to him**, but he shall not return to me." (2 Samuel 12:13-23).

It is not an injustice for God to take a baby to heaven. Heaven is described as "far better" in Philippians 1:23. In this case, the Lord decided to take the seven-day-old baby to Heaven. God is God in all His judgments.

In this life, we will never understand all of God's ways and judgments. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

One thing we can learn from this story is that babies go to Heaven when they die. David concluded this story by saying, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Where was David going when he died? He answered that question in Psalm 23:6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and **I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**"

This is the only story in the Bible that deals with this subject.

VII. What Happens To Children When They Die?

"Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had **no knowledge between good and evil**, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it." (Deuteronomy 1:39). This verse teaches us that very young children do not have any knowledge of good and evil. When they reach the age of discernment (some have called it "the age of accountability"), they will then need to be saved from their sins. I have heard of children being saved as young as four, five, or six years old. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15). Only God knows where that line is for each child.

Every child is a sinner, having inherited a sinful nature from their parents. Every human being is bent toward sin. Children do not have to learn to do wrong things. They do them by nature: "The wicked are

estranged from the womb: they **go astray as soon as they be born**, speaking lies.” (Psalms 58:3). “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and **in sin did my mother conceive me.**” (Psalms 51:5). “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Romans 5:12).

When children go from being sinners by nature to sinners by choice, they need to be saved. Seeing none of us knows when that is, we need to train up our children right and constantly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.” (Proverbs 20:11). “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” (Matthew 18:14). “But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” (Mark 10:14-15).

Some children can be cursed by God or condemned forever: “And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.” (2 Kings 2:23-24).

“And I saw the dead, **small** and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:12-15). The word “small” (Greek: *micros*) means to be little in stature or prestige.

VIII. What Happens To Miscarried Or Aborted Babies?

There are twenty-five occasions in the Scriptures where a pregnant woman is described as being “with child:” seventeen times in the Old Testament and eight times in the New Testament. Here are just a few examples: “And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art **with child**, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.” (Genesis 16:11). “As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is **with child**: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.” (Ecclesiastes 11:5). “Behold, a virgin shall be **with child**, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matthew 1:23).

Some verses tell us that God knew all about us while we are developing in the womb: “**Before** I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and **before** thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5). “For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.” (Hebrews 7:10). “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” (Psalms 139:13-16).

Other verses seem to tell us that God knew us before we were conceived in the womb: “According as he hath chosen us in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” (Ephesians 1:4). “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life **from the foundation of the world**, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” (Revelation 17:8).

We have seen clearly that a child in the womb is a human being. Thus we can presume God would take unto Himself all that are miscarried or aborted. The life that God gave will return to Him. Read Ecclesiastes 3:21 and Ecclesiastes 12:7.

IX. What Happened When Old Testament Saints Died?

There is an interesting statement found on eleven occasions in the Old Testament. It speaks of one dead as being “gathered to his people.” This phrase is never used in the New Testament. Here are a few examples: “Then **Abraham** gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was **gathered to his people**.” (Genesis 25:8). “And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was **gathered unto his people**.” (Genesis 25:17). “And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was **gathered unto his people**.” (Deuteronomy 32:50).

This statement has perplexed Bible students for years. Some believe it just means that the dead body becomes the possession of the living relatives to bury where they want. Others believe the statement refers to an afterlife reunion with loved ones. Some of the newer versions (perversions) do not tackle this subject – they merely delete these words without any explanation.

Matthew Henry in his commentary put it, “His body was gathered to the congregation of the dead, and his soul to the congregation of the blessed.”

Where was this gathering of Old Testament saints? It was to the place

referred to by Christ in Luke 16:19-31. As you read it, notice the six references to Abraham:

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31).

This word hell comes from “Hades” which means “the place of departed souls.” It appears to be in two compartments within eyesight of each other. One for the damned, a place of torment. The other for the blessed, a place of comfort.

The Old Testament saints were considered “captives” of that place within the heart of the earth until Jesus came and led them out at His resurrection. Jesus’ soul went into hell (Hades) when he died: “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (Acts 2:27). “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:31). “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40).

This intriguing story of Samuel shows us how he was brought up from the lower parts of the earth by the request of King Saul with the help of the witch of Endor. “Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he

stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, **Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?** And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.” (1 Samuel 28:11). Samuel said he was “disquieted” when he was brought up. He appeared to have been in quiet comfort, resting. This would reconcile Christ’s teaching about Hades with Abraham, who was comforted.

X. What Happened When Old Testament Sinners Died?

People in the Old Testament days were either converted or unconverted (see Psalm 51:13). The truths that we saw under the last point also apply here. These departed souls also go into Hades (hell) but into the place of torment where the Rich Man was (see Luke 16:19-31 again). The Old Testament saints were resurrected when Jesus rose from the grave. They ascended into heaven. Those that were sinners remained in the same place. There is no reference to them ever coming out.

XI. What Happens When New Testament Sinners Die?

Jesus continued to propound the doctrine of hell throughout His public ministry. He strongly warned people to repent, to be sure they did not go there.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matthew 5:22). “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” (Matthew 5:29-30). “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28). “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.” (Matthew 18:8-9). “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33).

Many other verses could be listed here. These are just some from Matthew. Those who die today without Christ join those of old who died without faith in the Lord. They are suffering in hell, which is located in the lower parts of the earth.

XII. What Happens When New Testament Saints Die?

First, our bodies go into the grave waiting the resurrection. Note the differences between our current bodies and our resurrected bodies: “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is **raised in incorruption**: It is sown in dishonour; it is **raised in glory**: it is sown in weakness; it is **raised in power**: It is sown a natural body; it is **raised a spiritual body**. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.**” (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

This new glorified body will be created anew at the instant of the rapture. “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:20).

Second, our spirit and soul go upward to be with God in Heaven immediately upon death. There is no soul sleep or waiting.

Remember, when Jesus died, His spirit went immediately up to the Father in heaven. Jesus never ceased to exist. His physical body died. His soul and spirit did not. His soul went into hell (Acts 2:27,31). His spirit went up to the Father. “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” (Luke 23:46). Likewise our spirit and soul go upward to be with God immediately upon death. “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21). “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire **to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far**

better:” (Philippians 1:21-23). “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to **be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.** Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-9).

Old Testament saints went into Hades (Abraham’s Bosom) for a time of rest. This was already covered under Point IX.

New Testament saints go directly to heaven upon their death:

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42). “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:3). “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24). “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:11).

Just a Thought: If the Old Testament saints were emptied out of Hades and taken to heaven, and the New Testament saints go directly to heaven, then seances (the practice of bringing up saints or departed loved ones) are a farce.

XIII. What Is The Second Death?

The second death is mentioned in three texts of the Book of Revelation: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:11). “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:6). “And I saw a

great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15).

The first death is a physical death, when the spirit leaves the body. The second death is an eternal death. A spiritual death. Being banished forever in an eternal lake of fire. Hell will be cast into the lake of Fire. Hence, hell is like a holding center. Then the guilty go to judgment, are sentenced, and go to the lake of fire which is like a prison.

“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

This is a very fearful thing and is repulsive to human nature. No one of us comes close to understanding how utterly holy God is, and how great His hatred is toward sin and rebellion. We should make an effort to understand this:

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

When we begin to understand how holy and perfect God is it makes us wonder how He could let any of us into Heaven! “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:18). Praise the Lord for Jesus Christ our Saviour! We who are saved need not fear the second death. Again: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:6).

XIV. What About Reincarnation?

The word reincarnation comes from the prefix “re” which means “again, anew or once more,” and the word “incarnate” which means “to give a new body to.” It is a teaching that life continues to cycle in the form of many different bodies and many different deaths. The transmigration of souls from lower to higher and back and forth is part of their belief. For instance, a fly may have once been a human or a cow or a skunk, etc. This is a doctrine taught in Hinduism, Brahmanism,

Buddhism, and other “new-age” religions.

In some parts of the world, this belief has led to very cruel treatment of human beings. A caste system of lepers and poor have been refused charity and medical help because they either have to pay for their sins of some past life or will have to suffer again in their next life. Other times people have starved, worshipping animals that could have been eaten for food, believing that animals may have been relatives from a past life.

The Bible says otherwise, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” (Hebrews 9:27). We only die once!

Jesus taught and showed us what happens when people die “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” (Luke 16:22-23). There is no Biblical grounds for reincarnation.

XV. Is There Another Chance After Death?

Can a person be saved after death? Is there a purgatory? Is there a baptism for the dead? Is there a second chance?

There is no chance after death for a person to change their eternal direction. We have seen already in our study that the Scriptures teach a person goes either to heaven or to hell immediately at death (the departure of the soul and spirit from the body.)

What about purgatory? There is no place in the Bible or the Catholic Bible that speaks about purgatory (the place of purging.) Purgatory is a man-made doctrine that teaches one should suffer for sins for a time until purged and fit for heaven. This can be assisted by living friends and relatives paying for “masses” to be said (Indulgences). None of this is in the Bible.

Some times 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 is used to teach purgatory. But what does the whole text in context say? “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s **work** shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s **work** of what sort it is. If any man’s **work** abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s **work** shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

The key is the word “**work**.” This is a picture of a believer’s judgment in heaven to determine what rewards he will receive. It is not the trial of their body by fire but the trial of a person’s *work* by fire. If a man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss. There will be loss of rewards in heaven, but not the loss of salvation.

What about the baptism of the dead? Some religions teach that a living person can be baptized for a dead person whether relative or friend of the past. This helps to procure that person’s salvation though dead. This is especially practiced in Mormonism. Mormonism has the most complete tables of genealogies because of this. One

Mormon lady has been baptized over three hundred times for dead people.

First, baptism does not save a person's soul. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (Note: This is the last time the word "baptize" is found in the Bible.)

We are saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. At that very moment we are baptized by Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." (Mark 1:8). "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:" (Luke 3:16). "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Do not confuse water baptism with Holy Spirit baptism. This is the presence of the Holy Spirit coming on a person at salvation. Jesus performs this baptism.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9). "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

What then is the baptism of the dead? The baptism of the dead was a false doctrine already invented in Paul's day to pervert the doctrine of baptism. Paul mentioned this false practice in 1 Corinthians 15:29: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 is in defense of the doctrine of the resurrection, both Christ's and ours.

There were those who denied that there even was a resurrection (Matthew 22:23) and those who were not sure (1 Corinthians 15:35). To them, Paul was saying, "Why do you baptize for the dead then? What does it matter?" He was using a false doctrine to question a contradiction in their beliefs.

It might be like saying to someone who does not believe in hell: "Why did you have your babies baptized?" I am not promoting baby baptism, but am using their false practice to challenge their belief that there is no hell.

There are no more chances to be saved after death. We must try to persuade them in this life to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Purgatory and baptizing for the dead are false. They do not give a person another chance.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." (2 Corinthians 5:11).

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28).

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;” (Hebrews 2:3).

XVI. What about Limbo?

Limbo is a teaching in some churches that describes the abode of souls kept from heaven through circumstance, such as a lack of baptism. It is especially used in reference to the place where unbaptized babies go. Limbo is actually from a medieval Latin word which means “the region on the border of hell.”

Again, as with purgatory and the baptism of the dead, there is not a shred of evidence of its existence in the scriptures. This is a man-made doctrine. It was never mentioned by Jesus Christ or any of his apostles.

To review what happens to babies that die, please see point VI of this study.

XVII. What About Organ Donation?

Organ donation is often considered a means of showing charity toward another person’s life. There are no known Scriptures for or against the donation of organs at death.

I know of two preacher’s wives, Pam LaCappuccia and Jeannie Davis, who are alive today because they received heart transplants. One verse of Scripture that is special to them is Isaiah 43:4, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.”

I have a report in my file cabinet on the positions of various religions on the subject of organ donations. Of the thirty religions in the report, only gypsies and Shintoists are in objection. Even Jehovah Witnesses, who oppose blood transfusions, allow organ donations.

This is one area where personal liberty might compel two different Christian to hold opposing views. There are a few issues like that: “For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” (Romans 14:2-7).

Those that differ in opinions must have love and respect for each other in these cases.

XVIII. Who Has The Keys Of Death And Hell?

Many religions and denominations have proudly made the claim that they are the only true church and know the only way to heaven. All

others will end up in hell or somewhere else.

One friend of mine who accepted Jesus Christ as His Saviour received a letter from the Mormons saying that his name was removed from the Book of Life. They claimed that they had that power.

What does the Bible say? "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation 1:18). Jesus alone has the keys to hell and death.

Only God can destroy a soul and body in hell: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28). Do not fear man. Do not fear religions that try to keep you in their system with their soul-slavery methods. Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. He is the only one that has the keys to hell and death. No man or religion has them.

If a person has a car's only set of keys, nobody else can drive that car. Likewise, someone cannot force others through the door to death and hell, if he does not have the keys. Only Christ holds those keys. Will Jesus be your Saviour or your Judge someday? Will He set you free or lock you up? Do you know Him as your Saviour?

XIX. The Destruction Of Death And Its Final Abode

There is a promise to us in 1 Corinthians 15:26: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Death is our last enemy. Even Satan will be destroyed before death:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:10-15).

After Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are cast into a lake of fire, hell delivers up its dead. These unsaved people have been in the lock-up of hell until their judgment day. Their works condemn them and their names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life. They are cast into a lake of fire.

After all condemned beings are cast into the lake of fire, death and hell will be cast in. This presumably means the power of death will never be free again. The last enemy of the human race, death, has been destroyed.

Those who are saved will enjoy a new heaven and a new earth. One of the promises of that blessed eternity includes this one: "And God shall

wipe away all tears from their eyes; and **there shall be no more death**, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Revelation 21:4).

The Bible’s last mention of death is a few verses later in “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8).

“Study to shew thyself approved
unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15
