

Individual Eschatology

I. Death

A. The Nature of Death

1. The basic meaning of death is separation.

- a) Gen. 35:18 – “It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.”
- b) Luke 23:46 – “And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.”
- c) Acts 7:59 – “They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’”
- d) James 2:26 – “For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

2. Three kinds of death are taught in Scripture.

- a) **Spiritual death** – Spiritual separation from God. The lifelessness of one’s spiritual nature resulting in the spiritual separation of the person from God. Eph. 2:1 – “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins. . . .5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”
- b) **Physical death** – Temporary separation of the soul/spirit from the body.

(1) James 2:26 – For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

(2) “Physical death is a termination of physical life by the separation of body and soul. It is never an annihilation. . . . Death is not a cessation of existence, but a severance of the natural relations of life. Life

and death are not opposed to each other as existence and non-existence, but are opposites only as different modes of existence" (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 668).

c) **Eternal death**— Eternal separation of the person from God following the resurrection.

(1) Rev. 20:14— then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

(2) Experienced only by those who do not accept Christ as Savior. Remedy? None.

B. The Significance of Death

1. To Old Covenant Saints

a) Death was regarded as a dreadful experience.

(1) Is. 38:10-12— "I said, "In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years." 11 I said, "I will not see the LORD, The LORD in the land of the living; I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. 12 "Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; As a weaver I rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom; From day until night You make an end of me."

(2) Job 10:20-22— "Would He not let my few days alone? Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer 21 Before I go-- and I shall not return-- To the land of darkness and deep shadow, 22 The land of utter gloom as darkness *itself*, Of deep shadow without order, And which shines as the darkness."

(3) Heb. 2:14-15— "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is,

the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

b) The fear of death was somewhat alleviated by initial revelation of the resurrection.

(1) Job 19:25-27 – 25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!"

(2) Isaiah 26:19 – “Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew *is as* the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.”

(3) Daniel 12:1-2 – 1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.”

c) The Old Testament saints looked forward to eternal life after the resurrection.

(1) Heb. 11:9-10 – “By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

(2) Heb. 11:13 – “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”

(3) Heb. 11:16— “But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.”

(4) Summary: verse 11 definitely refers to a place beyond the temporal nature of the land of Canaan. The individual hope of these O.T. saints is the city “with foundations” (Heb. 11:10); the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22-24); the “Jerusalem which is above” (Gal. 4:26); “the city of my [Christ’s] God” (Rev. 3:12); the “new Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:2); and “that great city, the holy Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:10).

2. To New Covenant Saints

a) Death is no longer feared.

(1) Rom. 8:2— “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

(2) 1 Cor. 15:53-57— “For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 “O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

b) Death is a means of entering the presence of Christ. 2 Cor. 5:8— “we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

- Thus there is no such thing as soul sleep

c) The example of Christ’s resurrection gives us confidence in our resurrection. 1 Cor. 15: 20 “But now Christ has been

raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”

d) The mystery and difficulty of death is mitigated by biblical pictures:

(1) Sleep (1 Cor. 15:51)

(2) Taking down a tent (2 Cor. 5:1)

(3) Coming home (2 Cor. 5:6-8).

e) Death is not inevitable 1 Cor. 15:51-52 — “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

II. Intermediate State

A. What it is The Intermediate State is the conscious existence of both the godly and the ungodly between physical death and the resurrection.

B. Biblical Terms

1. Sheol

- a) 65 times in the OT
- b) Grave--31 times
- c) Hell--31 times
- d) Pit--3 times

2. Hades

- a) 11 times in the NT
- b) KJV always translates “hell.”
- c) NASB translates “hades.”

3. Sheol and Hades are defined in the same way: the place where departed spirits are confined at physical death. Ps. 16:10--Acts 2:27, 31.

a) Ps. 16:10— “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.”

b) Acts 2:27, 31 — “BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.”

4. Other terms for the intermediate state

a) Abraham’s bosom — Luke 16:22 — “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.”

b) Paradise — Luke 23:43 — “And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”

c) Lowest Sheol — Deut. 32:22 — “For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.”

d) Heaven

(1) KJV --582 times

(2) Hebrew word, “*shamayim*,” plural, literally “the heights.”

(3) Greek word, “*ouranos*,” that which is raised up or lofty.

(4) Used of three heavens:

(a) First--sky, breathable atmosphere — Gen. 7:11-12 — 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky [the windows of

heaven, NKJV] were opened. 12 The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

(b) Second--planetary heaven—Gen. 1:14-17—
“Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. 16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. 17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth.”

(c) Third--where God dwells—2 Cor. 12:2— I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

C. The Intermediate State of the Believer

1. Believers are guaranteed that nothing, including death will ever separate them from Christ—Rom. 8:38-39—“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2. Believers are assured that death brings them immediately into the presence of Christ.

a) 2 Corinthians 5:6-8— “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord--7 for we walk by faith, not by sight--8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

(1) Teaches that at the moment the believer dies, enters into the presence of Christ.

(2) "Both the tenses of the infinitives in verse 8 and the parallelism between verse 8 and verse 6 indicate that being present with the Lord does occur the moment one dies" (A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 357).

b) Philippians 1:21-23 – "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, for *that* is very much better."

c) 1 Thess. 4:14 – "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." When Christ returns at the rapture--those of this dispensation who have died previously He brings with Him.

3. Other Scriptures against "soul sleep" (Based on a metaphor, "sleep," which is a poor basis for a doctrine). Cf. Luke 20:38; Luke 23:43-46. "The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, (which neither die nor sleep,) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies" (*Westminster Confession*, 32:1).

4. The intermediate state is generally to be preferred to that of even the mature Christian's present life. (Phil. 1:23)

5. Souls in the intermediate state are truly alive and conscious. (Luke 16 – Lazarus)

6. Souls in the intermediate state are resting. Rev. 14:13 – "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." Not inactivity and indifference. Biblical idea is satisfaction in service and freedom from evil.

7. They are yet in a state of incompleteness – awaits bodily resurrection. (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

8. Rewards are not yet distributed. 2 Tim. 4:8 – “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

9. They may or may not have an intermediate body.

a) Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared in bodily form before the resurrection.

b) Also Luke 16? Mat. 27:50-53?

D. The Intermediate State of the Unbeliever

1. Sheol or Hades (Hell) is a place of present torment. Luke 16:23 – “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.” Unmet desires, pain, infinite despair, memory.

2. In the future, Sheol-Hades will be placed in the Lake of Fire, which is clearly the place of eternal punishment.

a) Rev. 20:10 – And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

b) Rev. 20:14-15 – 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.