

Biblical Theology

Unit 5: Doctrine of Salvation – Lesson 7: Death and the Intermediate State

Understanding Death

1. *Death is a result living in a fallen world.*

- **Romans 5:12-14** - Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned
- **1 Corinthians 15:24-26** – Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
- **1 Corinthians 15:54-55** – When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

2. *In light of salvation, death means _____ for the believer.*

- **Philippians 1:20** – as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.
- **Revelation 2:10** – Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- **Romans 8:17** – and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- **Philippians 3:10** - that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

3. *Obedience to God is more important than preserving our own lives.*

- **Acts 20:24** – But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
- **Revelation 2:10** – Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- **Revelation 12:11** – And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

What Happens When People Die?

The scriptures seem to indicate an immediate destination for the soul following death and preceding resurrection.

1. *The souls of believers go immediately into God's presence.*

- **2 Corinthians 5:6-8** – So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- **Philippians 1:21-24** – For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.
- **Luke 23:46** – Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

2. *The souls of unbelievers go immediately into separated presence of torment.*

- **Luke 16:19-28**
 - Passage has bearing on those who died before Christ.

Other Varying Doctrines on Death

Other unorthodox views exist regarding the destination of souls following death and preceding resurrection.

1. *Soul Sleep*

- Scriptures often speak of death as “sleep” or “falling asleep” (Matt 9:24; 27:52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:16; et al) but never mentions soul sleep.
- Ancient terminology indicates a temporary state of physical but not conscious stasis.
- Scriptures indicate conscious intermediate state.
 - **Luke 16:19-28** – Lazarus and Rich Man.
 - **Revelation 6:10** – They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
 - **Matthew 17:3** – And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

2. *Ghosts / Disembodied Spirits*

- The scriptures do not teach or give indication that human spirits inhabit the earth after death.
- Argument is often made from 1 Samuel 28:3-35 in support of ghosts.
 - Witch of Endor is surprised and fearful at the appearance of Samuel indicating it was the doing of God.
 - It is the only occurrence in the scriptures of such an encounter and should be viewed as a narrative description rather than normative conclusion.

3. *Purgatory*

- Roman Catholic doctrines teach of a place where souls of believers go to be further purified from sin until they are ready to be admitted into heaven.
- Basis of teaching comes out of the Apocrypha, 2 Maccabees 12:42–45.
- Scriptures do not support the teaching of purgatory or any other teaching that does not regard death as the conclusion of man’s redemptive opportunity.

Discussion Questions

1. How do the scriptures encourage believers to view their own death?
2. How do the scriptures encourage believers to regard the death of fellow believers?
3. What is an appropriate response of the believer to the death of unbelievers?