

## Spirit Life, a Destroying Doctrine, Part 4

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Spirit Life, a Destroying Doctrine. In this study during the last several weeks, I have attempted to show the biblical doctrine concerning the state of the dead for several reasons. The first and primary reason is to relieve Christian people of the fear of death. We all know that we are going to die. We all know that a time comes when man passes from this present existence. We may have a vague understanding of the resurrection, but the Bible gives truths about death that dispel the problems created by the modern church's teaching, which consigns everyone to some sort of life immediately after death.

Most people, according to that modern teaching, are consigned to pain, torment, and torture far worse than anything they have ever experienced upon the earth. By implication, our God is made to appear gentle and loving while men are alive, but after death He is portrayed as cruel, vicious, and hateful, treating them with pain, torment, fear, and fire for centuries and centuries. That common teaching is upheld in a book titled *The First Five Minutes After Death*. You know what that teaching says about hell, so I will not read all of those pages. But I do want to read part of what the author says about what happens to Christians when they die.

He writes, "Apparently, at the instant of death, the soul that leaves the human body is immediately clothed with a spiritual or celestial body. This would be like the bodies of angels, eternal bodies not subject to decay or dissolution. This is not a Christian's permanent body, but a temporary one to use till the time when all God's children shall be gathered home and given new bodies."

On another page he says, "For the Christian, the moment of death is the doorway into a glorious life that will never end. Without exaggeration, we can be sure that heaven has joy inexpressible, bliss indescribable, and peace inexhaustible. Who can describe the magnificence of God's home? If earth is filled to capacity with the bounties of God's creative genius, surely heaven's beauty and splendor will be infinitely superior, surpassing all we can imagine. Eventually there will be a new earth from which all the scars of sin will be removed."

He presents this in such a way that the new earth is placed up in this heaven of which he speaks. He continues, "The new earth will be the exhibition of the limitless ability of our great God. New heavens will be there too. Where is a tongue that can describe them? The delightful adventures of God's children for eons to come will be to explore the almost countless galaxies of God's new handiwork and all the other wonders of His hand."

Last week I read Billy Graham on the same thing, saying that this is the reward of Christians: that they will travel from galaxy to galaxy and all over God's universe. No wonder the Christians of today are sitting on their thumbs and letting the Antichrist have the earth. If the Antichrist is conquering the earth because of the neutrality of Christians toward it, then this doctrine that teaches Christians to do nothing on earth but wait for heaven must come from someone who benefits from their neutrality.

Let us repeat what Jesus Christ said about His children going to heaven so that it may be fixed in your mind. In John 7:32-34, He speaks to the Pharisees: "The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Most fundamentalists would accept that the Pharisees could not go to heaven where Jesus was going with the Father. But what about the followers of Jesus Christ? Turn to John 13. Here we are at the Last Supper, and in the previous verses Judas has left. So Christ is speaking only to the eleven faithful disciples.

In John 13:33, Jesus says, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Here we have the words of Christ telling His disciples that they could not come to the heaven where He was going. Yet Dr. Orr, Billy Graham, and almost

every professing minister in America today teach that Christians immediately go to the place where Jesus said they could not go when they pass into death.

I said we would call three Old Testament witnesses. We have gone through Job and David. Turn with me now to Ecclesiastes, and we will read Solomon's witness concerning the state of the dead. As I read these things, remember that my primary purpose is to teach people the truth of what the Bible says so they will not fear death, so they will know the certainty of the resurrection, and so they will know that this earth is their home.

I believe the major reason the Antichrist is having such an easy time conquering the earth is because Christians believe they have nothing to do with the earth. They are giving up the abode where God said they would dwell eternally. Now the fundamentalists generally admit that the Old Testament does not teach translation to heaven, but teaches sleeping in the grave, except for one passage that we will examine.

Ecclesiastes 2:13-16 says, "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool."

In other words, Solomon says there is no difference between the death of the wise man and the death of the fool. Turn to chapter 3, starting in verse 17.

Ecclesiastes 3:17-21 says, "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"

Usually those who teach that you go in some sort of spirit form, with a body that can feel, hear, and think, and that you go to heaven, do not read those verses. But they do read the next one. They also read Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

I have read that verse in their literature. I have had them tell it to me personally, and I have had them write it to me in letters. They quote Solomon and say, "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Then they say that this means that when a person dies, he goes to heaven. I have a question to ask first, and then we will examine Solomon's statement and see whether that is really what he said.

Here is my question: Is there not something wrong when a minister says that all the Old Testament saints died and went to Sheol, that no saints died and went directly to heaven until after Christ, and admits, as Billy Graham did, that the Old Testament teaches the dead are asleep, but then turns around and quotes Solomon's words, written in the Old Testament about nine hundred years before Christ, to say that anyone who now dies goes to heaven?

They use Solomon's Old Testament words to claim that a man's conscious spirit goes directly to heaven upon death, even while admitting that the Old Testament does not teach that doctrine. There is something fundamentally wrong with using the New Testament to claim that people go to heaven, admitting the Old Testament does not teach it, and then turning around and quoting this verse from the Old Testament as proof.

They do this continually. They say, in effect, "Yes, I know the rest of the Old Testament says we sleep in the grave, but Solomon said that when a man dies, his spirit returns unto God who gave it." There appears to be a contradiction here, but the contradiction is not in the Scripture. It is in their interpretation.

In order to accept Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 12:7 as meaning that a person's conscious spirit goes to heaven when he dies, we would have to reject what Job said, what David said, what Jesus said, and even what Solomon said only a few chapters earlier. Turn to Ecclesiastes 9, beginning in verse 2.

Ecclesiastes 9:2-6 says, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

This is the same man writing only a few pages earlier in Ecclesiastes. Solomon wrote here that all the righteous and all the wicked go to Sheol. He said of Sheol, which is the word translated "grave" in verse 10, that there is no work, no device, no knowledge, and no wisdom there. He said even their hatred and their envy are perished. He must have read David, who said that in that very day their thoughts perish.

This same wisest of all men wrote Ecclesiastes 12:7, saying, "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." He also wrote Ecclesiastes 3:21: "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" The fundamentalists ignore Solomon's statements about the dead knowing nothing, forgetting everything, and having no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in the place where they go. Then they quote the two verses where he speaks of the spirit.

We should examine those verses further. But before we do, I want to show you in 1 Kings 3 what God Almighty said about Solomon. Otherwise, from what we have read, some may think Solomon was foolish enough to contradict himself within a few pages of writing.

In 1 Kings 3:5, when Solomon comes to the throne, we read, "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." Part of what Solomon asked is found in verses 9 and 10: "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing."

God answered in 1 Kings 3:11-12: "And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

In other words, after Solomon became king over Israel, God made him the wisest of all men who had ever lived. God said Solomon would be wiser than any man who would follow him. So here is Solomon, the wisest of all men, writing in Ecclesiastes. He says the dead know not anything, and he also says the spirit of man goes upward and returns unto God who gave it. We must therefore understand what he meant by the word "spirit."

I looked up that word spirit in Strong's Concordance, and you can do the same if you have one. In Ecclesiastes 3:21, where it says, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" the Hebrew word translated "spirit" is ruach. It is also translated "breath" in many places in the Bible, including Ecclesiastes 3:19.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 says, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath." That word "breath" in verse 19 comes from the same Hebrew word that is translated "spirit" in verse 21.

So a man hath no preeminence above a beast, for all is vanity. Solomon says, "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Then he asks, "Who knoweth the ruach of man that goeth upward, and the ruach of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Before we explain that, let us read a couple of places in Genesis where this same Hebrew word is translated "breath."

Our understanding of what Solomon meant by ruach will determine our understanding of what this spirit is that goes upward and goes back to God. You know very well that almost every fundamentalist church in America teaches that this spirit is a living, conscious, feeling, breathing spirit with a spirit body.

In Genesis 6:17, God warns of the flood: "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die." In Genesis 7:15, we read, "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life." In these two chapters we see that men have ruach and beasts have ruach. That is the Hebrew word.

The same word is used in Psalm 104, in the words of David. Beginning in Psalm 104:24, he writes, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." He continues praising God for His creation, for the earth and all that is upon it.

Psalm 104:29-30 says, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." In verse 29 the word ruach is translated "breath." In verse 30 it is translated "spirit." So the translators understood the word spirit and the word breath in these places to represent the same Hebrew word ruach.

It is also used in Psalm 146:3-4, which we read last week: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

Here we have good, godly David, a man after God's own heart according to the Bible, saying that in the day a man loses his ruach, his very thoughts perish. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:21 that this ruach goes upward, and in Ecclesiastes 12:7 that it returns unto God who gave it. What is it? I think the answer is in Psalm 104.

Psalm 104:29-30 says, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." Very obviously, the word ruach means the power of life, the breath of life, that power which God breathes into all creatures, including man, giving them the ability to be alive.

It is not a separate existence. It is not a separate entity. It is not man himself in some other form. It is nothing more nor less than what we find here: God takes it away, and they die. God gives it, and they are made alive. Yet the fundamentalists take the word "spirit" out of Solomon's passage in Ecclesiastes and say that it is a man, a person, a character, a personality, a memory, and a body that can see, hear, feel, think, touch, and go to heaven when he dies.

I have spent some time on this subject, but that word spirit, or breath, translated from the Hebrew word ruach, is nothing more nor less than the power to be alive. We have seen that Job believed in sleep until the resurrection. We have seen that David believed in sleep in the grave until the resurrection. Jesus taught that the dead were asleep until the resurrection. Paul taught that we sleep until the resurrection. John taught that we sleep until the resurrection.

So why would Solomon not believe and write the same thing? When he wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:21, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward?" he was speaking of the ruach, or power of life, that goes upward to the God who gave it, to be returned to man on the day of resurrection.

Even scientists tell us that in the natural world energy can neither be created nor destroyed. This power God has given to animals and to all life upon the earth is apparently a form of energy. When God takes it from us, we die. It is not some separate spirit being. It is the energy and power of life that God has given us.

When Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," he meant that the ruach returns to God to be kept by Him until the day of resurrection, when it will be returned to us. When he said in Ecclesiastes 3:21 that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes downward, it is because the beasts are not promised resurrection. The power of life God has given to individual beasts will not be returned to them. They will not be resurrected.

Therefore Solomon's words are not contradictory. Solomon says the same thing Job said, David said, Jesus said, and the entire New Testament says: the dead know nothing in the grave. God keeps the power of life until the resurrection of the dead, and then He returns it.

Would God that these people would read these things and recognize that this is resurrection. William Tyndale said that by putting departed souls in heaven, hell, and purgatory, men destroy the arguments whereby Christ and Paul prove the resurrection. When men say Solomon meant that the spirit going back to God is a spirit being going to heaven, they destroy what Solomon was actually saying: that God will hold that power of life until the resurrection and return it to you.

No wonder our people do not understand the resurrection. No wonder our people fear death. No wonder they surrender to their enemies, because they fear this thing they do not understand. That is what Paul said in Hebrews: we are all our lifetimes subject to bondage.

I have run across a few people in this life who seem to have no fear of death, and they are, by and large, perhaps the best citizens in the nation. I have personally heard officers say that in combat they would rather have ten Christians than a hundred pagans, because Christians generally do not fear death as the heathen do. Why? Because they have some knowledge and some understanding that God will raise them from the dead.

Can you imagine an entire nation of God's Israel people with the understanding of the truth of what the Bible teaches? We would be invincible, and we would stop referring to our enemies as so powerful and stop giving in to them.

Now I will ask another question. If your garage mechanic or insurance man lied to you the way your ministers do, you would never go back to them, would you? If you went to a department store and the label on the clothing or furniture said one thing, and the salesman said, "Well, it does not really mean that; what it means is this," and then told you something else, you would turn around and leave. You would be afraid to spend your money with a salesman who told you the label did not mean what the label said.

Yet hundreds of thousands of God's people who know that ministers are lying to them about this and other things go back week after week and year after year, give their money to that salesman, and try to get him to read the label correctly, instead of leaving and taking their business someplace else.

You may think that is a rather callous interpretation of what people are doing, but I am convinced that lying by preachers is much more damaging and much more dangerous to our people than lying by any other person. God has placed upon them the responsibility, supposedly, of preaching His truth. This includes simple truths such as Solomon telling us that the spirit, the power of life God gave us, is taken to Him when we die, kept by Him, and returned to us when He resurrects us from the grave.

Turn over to 2 Timothy. Here is a verse that is quite well known. In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul says, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

What could Paul have been talking about? Paul, the great disciple, told us that he knew that in him dwelt no good thing. He knew he was a sinner. He knew that all men had sinned and come short of the glory of God. Yet

he had committed something to God that he knew God was able to keep until that day. What was it? It was the very thing we have just read in Ecclesiastes: the power of life, the ruach, the breath of life which God gives to man, takes from him when he dies, and will return to him on resurrection day. Paul knew that. He believed Christ would be able to keep it until then.

My time goes so fast, but I must cover some of this briefly. Many have asked about several passages in the New Testament, and I will go into them as I have time. Turn to 2 Corinthians 5. I realize we have spent most of our time in the Old Testament during the last four weeks, but you must understand and believe that the New Testament cannot contradict the Old Testament. Otherwise, something is wrong with our understanding of what we are reading.

In 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, we read, "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."

In *The First Five Minutes After Death*, the author quotes that passage and then writes almost two pages on it, saying that it means as long as we are alive we are not with the Lord, but when we die we will go immediately into His presence. Again, when we run into these apparent contradictions, we should look up these things.

The word "absent" here comes from Greek words that carry the sense of being away from, or desiring away from. You have to put these things together, but let us read on first and then consider the passage further.

In 2 Corinthians 5:8-10, Paul says, "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. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Now let us read verse 6 again: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." The word "home" there is from a Greek word that, in effect, means to be bound with something or desirous of something. I suspect Paul was saying that while we desire to serve the body, we are absent from the Lord, and when we desire not to serve the body, we are present with the Lord.

Paul wrote much exhortation about being careful not to serve the desires of the body. He called them the sins and lusts of the flesh. From what Paul knew and from what the rest of the Bible tells us, it is impossible that he meant literally that while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord.

Let me demonstrate. I will ask you all a question. You are all here this morning. You are alive, and you are present in your body. You are at home in your body. Are you all absent from the Lord? It is impossible, scripturally, to be absent from the Lord merely because you are alive. Jesus Christ told us in several places that He would come and dwell with us. Paul wrote pages about God's Spirit living with us.

To interpret these verses to mean that you must die before you can be in the presence of the Lord is to wrest them from their meaning and from the meaning of all the other Scriptures around them. I think Paul was saying in verse 8 that he would rather not serve the lusts and desires of the body, but would rather be with God.

If we take it as literally interpreted by the fundamentalists, we would deny what Christ said in John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Yes, Jesus Christ is with us. We need not die in order to be in the presence of the Lord.

Jesus also said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Turn to Philippians 1:21-23: "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."

This is very similar to the other passage. As we read it, remember that Paul knew the dead know not anything. If he meant by "depart" to die and be with Christ, then it still means only the simple truth that the first conscious moment after death is the resurrection. Paul knew that he might die at the hands of his enemies.

In Philippians 1:20, he said, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Then he says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He is not saying that he would have to die to gain Christ. To interpret it that way, again, we would have to deny that Christ exists and lives within us while we live in this body.

This is what Billy Graham said in his answer to someone who wrote to him and said that he had always been taught that at the moment of death we went to be with God, but then he read the Old Testament and it did not seem to say that. Graham said, among other things, that although it is difficult to think of a conscious existence for a disembodied spirit, the New Testament principle is simply this: for the Christian, absent from the body, present with the Lord. That is his argument.

But by his interpretation, he is saying that as long as we are in this body we are not with God, and that denies everything the New Testament teaches. It denies the existence of the Holy Spirit.

Turn to John 5. These are the words of Jesus Christ concerning the resurrection. In John 5:24-25, He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live."

Notice that He did not say that we pass from life unto life. He is talking about the resurrection from the dead. He said we pass from death unto life, not from one life into another life. There are scores more passages in the New Testament showing that the great hope of the Christian is the resurrection from the dead.

I believe that hope has been taken from us. We have been confused by the false teaching of preachers who say, "Oh no, immediately upon your death you will go to heaven and live there forever." I will say this: the conquest of God's people, our Israel people, by the Antichrist rests primarily upon two lies, both preached by ministers as if they were truth.

The first lie is this: you are not Israel, but the Jews are; therefore rulership in the kingdom is theirs, not yours. The second lie, which stands together with the first, is this: the earth is not your home. Heaven is your future abode, and you have nothing whatsoever to do with this earth. Do not worry about it. Forget it. It is terrible, and we are leaving.

Those two lies, I am convinced, are the foundation of the propaganda that is destroying the Christian will to live on this earth as a Christian and oppose the wickedness and evil of the Antichrist. Who teaches that? The politicians? The newspapers? No, my friends. That is taught in somewhere around five hundred thousand churches in Christendom. Those two lies are preparing Christians to surrender to the Antichrist and to let them steal God's kingdom from them.

Thank God that His truth will soon tear away the veil from our eyes and stop these lies. I believe it will also stop the mouths of the liars. God will deliver His people, and they will have to be delivered by reading, believing, and understanding His truth, not the lies of the Antichrist.

Let us stand. Our Father and our God, we thank You for this great hope that Thou hast given us. We pray that You will work in us a great work, that we shall see and know and understand and believe that resurrection day is coming, and that we shall rule and reign in Thy kingdom on the earth in righteousness and truth under Thee. We thank You for it in Jesus' name. Amen.