

Death and Resurrection

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;
There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.
There shall be no more pain,
For the former things have passed away.
Revelation 21:4

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The Scriptures used in this booklet are:

- The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)*
Jewish New Testament Publications
Clarksville, Maryland, 1998
- The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)*
Oxford University Press
London
- The Open Bible*
New King James Version (NKJV),
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.
- The Tanakh (TNK),*
Jewish Publication Society,
Philadelphia/New York, 1988

~ Introduction ~

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption,
And this mortal has put on immortality,
Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:
"Death is swallowed up in victory."
1 Corinthians 15:54



An ancient adage states there are only two things one can be sure of in this life; death and taxes. When a person is young, neither of these seem important, but as one grows older, death in particular begins to loom ever larger. Often times young people behave as though they are immortal, since death seems very remote to them. However, as people mature, they begin to understand mortality more fully, and their perception of death changes from a remote possibility into a harsh reality that must be faced.

Neil Gillman, who is Chair of the Department of Jewish Philosophy at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, has written a very interesting book entitled; *The Death of Death*. Gillman has this to say about death:

"To insist on the finality of death is to condemn the totality of human life to meaninglessness. Human life cannot be fulfilled here on earth. We are born and grow into adulthood with hopes and visions, goals and ideals, yet most of us prepare to die with a haunting sense of potentials unfulfilled, aspirations unrealized, relationships unresolved, accounts still not balanced. Our life-experience is inevitably fragmented." (P. 249)

How we react to our own mortality, and the approach of death, is a direct reflection of our personal belief system. In both Christian and Jewish theology a great deal of confusion exists on just what constitutes death and whether or not one can expect an afterlife. For those who do believe in an afterlife, there is additional disagreement concerning just when that afterlife begins, who will be included in it, and what it will be like.

Certainly, in the secular world, it should come as no surprise that such confusion exists, for some people have had

what is commonly called a "near-death" experience; where their heart and respiratory system had ceased to function, but were brought back to "life" by medical professionals. During this time, some have witnessed to having had an out of body experience; having been able to look down upon their bodies being worked upon by the doctors and nurses, hearing all that was said, and seeing all that was taking place. Others relate what they believe to have been a journey into another realm, where they claim to have seen departed relatives and/or friends who have preceded them in death. Some say they were told to go back, for their time had not yet come.

Of course, the records also include the stories of others who have "died" on the operating table and been brought back to life, having had no recollection at all of any "out of body" experience or of any "journey" into another realm.

It is not the purpose of this article to support or reject the claims of people who have had these "near-death" experiences. To the individuals involved, such experiences are real beyond doubt. Some, who hold to the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, see these experiences as proof positive for their theological position. Others look upon them as similar to vivid dreams which sometimes take place in response to what the body is experiencing. Still others see such experiences as having been programmed by God and placed in the human mind or spirit so that a person is able to exit this human life in the easiest possible manner, psychologically speaking.

Shalom!

DEW & SAW

Beit Shalom, 2009

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~ The Sting of Death ~

The sting of death *is* sin,
And the strength of sin *is* the law.
I Corinthians 15:56

For by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.
Romans 3:20b



As Believers in *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoo'-ah

Hah Mah-shee'ackh = Jesus the Messiah) we accept the Holy Scriptures, both Hebrew and Greek (Old and New Testaments) as the revealed word of God. Therefore, we look to the Scriptures for the basis of our beliefs, rather than to the testimony of others, no matter how credible that testimony may seem to be, for we believe, as it is written that:

"All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

(II Tim. 3:16-17)

Armed with this understanding, knowing that the Scriptures contain the answers to our deepest and most intimate questions about life and death, let us first explore the realm of death; then in the following chapter, *The Hope of the Resurrection*, we will continue with a look at how death can be overcome.

~ Death, the Nemesis of Life ~

There are many mysteries inherent to human life. None of us asked to be born, but we were, and we had no control over who our parents would be, or what might be the circumstances of our life. Some of us were born to poverty, others to riches, while most were born to an existence somewhere in between. Our gender, race, and the social status of our families at our birth were all totally out of our control. For most people, their religion has also been directly related to where, and to whom they were born and unless they have had a personal encounter with their Creator and/or Savior, as did *Shaul* (Shah-ool = Saul) on the road to Damascus, most people tend to believe much the same as their parents or the society around them.

Yet, almost all people, no matter what their religion, would probably agree that death is the cessation of physical life and therefore an enemy to our physical existence. For this reason death is fought, delayed and even cheated, if possible. But eventually death always wins, for as it is written:

"To everything *there is* a season,

A time for every purpose under heaven:

A time to be born,

And a time to die;"

(Eccl. 3:1-2a)

Before proceeding, it is important to understand the various theories concerning the state of the dead. We can then compare these with what the scriptures tell us about what actually constitutes death. Within each of these three beliefs there are certain variations, depending upon the understanding of the particular sects (churches) which hold them. All three of these beliefs find adherents in both modern Judaism and Christianity. We will cover them briefly and then focus in on the Scriptural view point.

* Cessation of Life *

As was already mentioned, death can be defined as the cessation of physical life. Breathing stops, the blood which carries the necessary oxygen and nutrients throughout the body ceases to flow, and the physical body dies. This is true for humans and animals alike. This observation was made by King Solomon, when he wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes under the pseudonym of "the Preacher:"

"I said in my heart, 'Concerning the estate of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are *like* beasts.'

"For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beasts, for all *is* vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust." (Eccl. 3:18-20)

This point of view squares with what *HaShem* (Hah-Shem' = the Name or *YHVH*) told Adam on the day of sin when he and his wife *Chava* (Hah'-vah = Eve) ate of the forbidden fruit from the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

"'Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat of it

All the days of your life.

Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you *are*,

And to dust you shall return.'" (Gen. 3:17b-19)

This seems to be a rather dismal assessment of the state of human life. Man is born, man lives, man dies, just like an animal. Man was formed from the dust of the earth, and he returns to that state after death. It is precisely because of this point of view that "the Preacher" opens the book of Ecclesiastes with these words:

"'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher;

'Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.'

What profit has a man from all his labor

In which he toils under the sun?

One generation passes away, and another generation comes;

But the earth abides forever."

(Eccl. 1:2-4)

This view is held by many people, especially those who do not have strong religious convictions. Man is born, he lives his life for better or for worse, and then he dies and that is that. No

~ Three Views of the State of the Dead ~

afterlife, no resurrection, no immortal soul. No conscious life once this physical one is finished. People with this view claim that if man has any immortality whatsoever, it is in the work they do, or the legacy they leave through their children, or in the organic material from their bodies that goes back to the soil to fertilize the growth of other life forms on the earth.

Yet, despite all of this talk about the vanity of life, the Preacher does seem to understand that there must be more to life than just being born, living a human life, and dying, for when he comes to the very end of the book of Ecclesiastes he indicates that something yet lies ahead other than complete oblivion:

**"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is the whole duty of man.
For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether it is good or whether it is evil."**
(Eccl. 12:13-14)

The Preacher does not seem to understand exactly how this future judgment of human works will take place, but his statement does imply that the dead will somehow know the outcome. If this were not so, there would be no point in having a post life judgment. The Preacher also questions the possibility that an afterlife might be in store for humans when he speculates:

**"Who knows if a man's lifebreath does rise upward
and if a beast's breath does sink down into the earth?"**
(Eccl. 3:21 Tanakh)

The Preacher would like to think that such is the case, but he just does not know and is not afraid to admit his ignorance; a refreshing position for a "Preacher" to take.

** The Immortality of the Soul **

Probably the most common afterlife belief found among both Christians and Jews, is in the Immortality of the Soul. In this belief system the body and the soul are considered to be two separate entities which have been joined together at birth. Thus, the physical body becomes merely a 'shell' or 'husk' which is used as a temporary abode for the soul, which is said to be immortal and composed, not of flesh and blood, but of some nonphysical essence. At death, it is believed that the 'immortal' soul separates from the body and returns to one of three places, determined either by the person's works or their acceptance/rejection of Christ:

- ◆ The righteous soul returns to God in heaven where it continues to exist forever in His presence, praising Him for all eternity.
- ◆ The wicked soul is consigned to a place of fiery torment, commonly called hell, where it exists for all eternity separated from God and in great torture for its unrepentant attitude and unforgiven sins.
- ◆ Some also believe in a third place, called purgatory, where the souls of those who are neither totally righteous nor totally wicked are placed during an

interim period of indeterminate length. After serving their time in purgatory (usually in a condition that is similar but not as bad as the 'hell' of the wicked) they are released to join their righteous friends and relatives in heaven.

Of course there are other variations to the scenarios given here, but in general at least the first two points of this doctrine are believed by the vast majority of today's Christians and Jews.

It is important to note that the concept of the Immortality of the Soul was in existence long before our Savior, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, walked the earth in the first century CE. It was a common belief among some of the Jews of *Y'shua's* day, especially among those who had come under the influence of the Greek culture, called 'Hellenism.' This should come as no surprise, since the origin of the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul is admitted by all knowledgeable religious teachers as coming from Greek philosophy. It is interesting to note, however, that the sect of the Essenes (who were anti-Hellenistic to the extreme) also believed in the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul.

Probably the earliest, and most complete, treatise on the Immortality of the Soul comes from the famous Greek philosopher, Plato. Plato was born (c. 428 BCE) in Athens, Greece, to a distinguished family. He was greatly influenced by an older philosopher named Socrates, and was probably in his twenties when Socrates was brought to trial on a charge of impiety, and for corrupting the youth of Athens by questioning authority. He was found guilty and given a death sentence. Socrates' execution was self inflicted when he drank a tea made from hemlock, an extremely poisonous plant. He is said to have taken the poison willingly because he felt that it would release his 'soul' from his physical body and he would then be free to join the great philosophic 'mind' that exists eternally in the spiritual realm. Socrates' death is described in detail in Plato's *Phaedo*, one of the most famous stories in all of ancient literature.

Another Greek philosopher who believed in the Immortality of the Soul was Aristotle (c.384-322 BCE - his life also overlapping that of Plato). Aristotle believed that what lived on after death was the 'intellect' of the individual, and at death the 'intellect' departed to join the 'universal intellect' where it was 'illuminated' for all eternity. Aristotle not only taught that man had an immortal soul, but that animals, and even plants, did also. The *Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary*, under the entry entitled *Soul*, concurs with Aristotle's position:

"As defined by the Schoolmen, following Aristotle, it [the soul] is the primary principle of life. Thus plants are said to have a vegetative soul, animals a sensitive soul, man a rational soul. In man, the soul is the principle of all his vegetative (growth, etc.) sensitive (feeling) and rational (thinking, willing) activity.

"The human soul is said to be the substantial form of the body indicating the intimate union of soul and body that constitutes one human nature. Vegetative, sensitive and rational souls are simple, i.e., have no parts. But vegetative and sensitive souls can only exist and operate independently of the body; in other words the

human soul is spiritual. From the spirituality of the human soul is deduced its immortality." (p. 179)

In the Jewish world, Philo of Alexandria, Egypt (c. 20 BCE to 50 CE), a contemporary of *Y'shua*, is perhaps the leading proponent of the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul. However, his teachings are thought to have been unknown in Judea and the Galilee during his lifetime and, therefore, Philo's influence was not felt much within the Jewish world until later.

However, there were other writings that existed during that time, with which Jews of *Y'shua's* day would likely have been familiar. Many of these writings taught the Immortality of the Soul and are primarily found in the *Apocrypha* (spiritual books which were not canonized as Scripture) and the *Pseudopigraphy* (books written by unknown individuals who used the name of a famous figure from Scripture such as Adam or Abraham.) Following is an excerpt from one of these writings called *The Wisdom of Solomon*:

"But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction, but they are at peace." (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3)

The Christian world, like the Jewish world, acquired the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul from Greek philosophy. Today the vast majority of Christian faiths proclaim the Immortality of the Soul as a primary doctrine, and because of mainstream Christianity's acceptance of this doctrine, it has become the predominant belief in all Western thought. In addition, most Christians also incorporate the resurrection of the body as a part of their doctrine, saying that the immortal soul is reunited with the body at the time of resurrection. However, as we will come to see, the Immortality of the Soul and bodily resurrection are basically incompatible concepts.

While the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul is very comforting to those who believe they are going to be among the 'righteous' (for it offers the individual an afterlife that begins immediately upon death), it has no factual basis in the Scriptures. Nowhere in the Scriptures is the term 'immortal soul' found, and nowhere in the Scriptures is this concept put forth in any recognizable manner. On the contrary, the Scriptures, both Hebrew and Greek, speak of resurrection as being our hope for the future. Resurrection does not make sense if one's 'soul' is permanently alive and conscious in heaven, hell or purgatory. If such were the case, a resurrection would not be needed, for the individual would still be alive.

** Reincarnation **

A variation on the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, is a belief in reincarnation. In this concept once the 'soul' is released from the physical body at death it then reenters another living entity. Again, there are variations in belief as to how this takes place. Some believe that the 'soul' can only move into another human body, while others hold that the 'soul' can enter any type of living creature including plants. In

English there are three different terms used for this 'process': reincarnation, transmigration of souls, and metempsychosis.

In the doctrine of reincarnation it is held that 'souls' can exist entirely apart from any physical creature. In other words, 'souls' are thought to have an independent existence, with all of the 'souls' having existed prior to being joined with a human body. It is unclear where or when they originated.

The supposed purpose of reincarnation is the perfecting of the 'soul.' The individual 'soul' has to keep returning to earth, within various life forms, until it is 'perfected.' Once this perfection has taken place the 'soul' is 'reunited' with a resurrected body for eternity. Exactly which of its many bodies it is permanently reunited with is also unclear.

Although the doctrine of reincarnation has close ties with ancient pagan beliefs, it is still accepted by a few Christian sects and at least some Jewish mystics. It fits in closely with modern 'new age' teachings.

~ The Depths of Sheol ~

It is not possible for us to understand the state of the dead from a Scriptural standpoint without coming to understand the meaning of the Hebrew word *sheol* (she-ohl', Strong's #7585). *Sheol* corresponds to the Greek word *hades* (hay'-dees, Strong's #86) and is often translated into the English word "hell." However, *sheol* has two other English translations as well: "grave," and "pit." Meanwhile, the Greek word *hades* is translated as "hell" every time it occurs except in I Cor. 15:55, where it is translated as "grave." The early Puritans of America understood that *sheol* and *hades* meant a pit or hole in the ground, for they used to talk about putting their potatoes in 'hell' for winter storage.

Thus, the literal meaning of *sheol* and *hades* is simply "the grave." This is where the dead physical body is placed so that it can return to dust, just as God had indicated to Adam that it would do.

Because of the finality of death over physical life, *sheol* becomes a very powerful image in religious teaching. Many writers of Scripture (under inspiration from *YHVH*) use *sheol* to create images of the power of death over physical life. For example, the prophet Jonah used the imagery of *sheol* to aid in explaining his perception of conditions in the belly of the great fish:

"Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.

And he said:

'I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction,

And He answered me.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,

And You heard my voice,

For You cast me into the deep,

Into the heart of the seas,

And the floods surrounded me;

All Your billows and Your waves

Passed over me.

Then I said, "I have been cast out of Your sight;

Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple."

The waters encompassed me, even to my soul;

The deep closed around me;

**Weeds were wrapped around my head.
I went down to the moorings of the mountains;
The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever;
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit,
O LORD my God."** (Jonah 2:1-6)

It is sometimes debated whether Jonah actually died in the fish's belly and was subsequently resurrected back to life, or whether he was alive and conscious the entire time. We will not know the answer to that question until the day comes when we can ask him. In the meantime, what we have is a powerful poetic image explaining how Jonah was consigned to death, how that experience is likened to being buried in *sheol* (the grave), and how he was brought up out of *sheol* having his life returned to him at least in a type of resurrection, if not a literal one.

Further information about *sheol* can be obtained from Psalm 88, where the psalmist cries out to God from deep affliction:

**"O LORD, God of my salvation,
I have cried out day and night before You.
Let my prayer come before You;
Incline Your ear to my cry.
For my soul is full of troubles,
And my life draws near to the grave (*sheol*).
I am counted with those who go down to
the pit (*bor* = pit);
I am like a man *who has* no strength,
Adrift among the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave (*keber* = sepulchre),
Whom You remember no more,
And who are cut off from Your hand." (Psalm 88:1-5)**

The psalmist likens his life, of being completely cut off from his friends and family, as similar to the way it is when one dies and is buried in *sheol*:

**"You have laid me in the lowest pit,
In darkness, in the depths.
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
And You have afflicted *me* with all Your waves. Selah.
You have put away my acquaintances far from me;
You have made me an abomination to them;
I am shut up, and I cannot get out;
My eye wastes away because of affliction."
(Psalm 88:6-9a)**

In the midst of this very despairing cry, we find the psalmist questioning whether or not there will be a future redemption:

**"LORD, I have called daily upon You;
I have stretched out my hands to You.
Will You work wonders for the dead?
Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah.
Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?
Shall Your wonders be known in the dark?**

And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"
(Psalm 88:9b-12)

The picture of *sheol* given in Psalm 88 is of a place where one is totally cut off from God. It is a place of destruction where the body disintegrates into dust. It is a place of complete darkness and a 'land of forgetfulness,' where there is no memory or consciousness. Yet in the midst of this bleak picture of *sheol*, there is still a measure of hope.

A more complete answer to our question, as to whether or not there can be salvation from such a place as *sheol*, comes in the very next Psalm, which is a companion to Psalm 88, both being titled: *A Contemplation of Heman the Ezrahite*. Here the same psalmist claims God's promises, even in the midst of great affliction:

**"Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one,
And said: 'I have given help to one who is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
I have found My servant David:
With My holy oil I have anointed him,
With whom My hand shall be established;
Also My arm shall strengthen him.'**

...
**"He shall cry to Me, "You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation,"
Also I will make him *My* firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.**

**My mercy I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall stand firm with him.
His seed also I will make to endure forever,
And his throne as the days of heaven."
(Psalm 89:19-20,26-29)**

Out of total despair comes the cry of hope for a future era when King Messiah (pictured here as one likened to king David) will reign during a time that is described as "forever." Through a veil of suggestions and metaphors, we see hope for an afterlife existing beyond *sheol* or the grave.

~ The Totality of Death ~

According to Scripture all men must die; death being the complete cessation of life. This includes any type of conscious life separate from the body. Let us establish this principle by looking at several Scriptures:

**"Why should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?
Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him --
For the redemption of their souls *is* costly,
And it shall cease forever --
That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit.**

**"For he sees *that* wise men die;
Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish,**

And leave their wealth to others.
 Their inner thought *is that their houses will continue*
 forever,
 And their dwelling places to all generations;
 They call *their* lands after their own names.
 Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain;
He is like the beasts that perish." (Psalm 49:5-12)

Here we see that nothing we do in this life, whether it be great achievements, or even great riches, can redeem us or our loved ones from *sheol*, the grave.

The next four passages preclude the possibility that the immortal souls of the 'righteous' go to heaven and live in the light of the Father, praising Him day and night.

**"For in death *there is no remembrance of You;*
 In the grave who will give You thanks?"** (Psalm 6:5)

**"The dead do not praise the LORD,
 Nor any who go down into silence."** (Psalm 115:17)

**"For Sheol cannot thank You,
 Death cannot praise You;
 Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for
 Your truth.
 The living, the living man, he shall praise You,
 As I do this day; ..."** (Isa. 38:18-19a)

**"I cried out to You, O LORD;
 And to the LORD I made supplication:
 'What profit *is there* in my blood,
 When I go down to the pit?
 Will the dust praise You?
 Will it declare Your truth?'"** (Psalm 30:8-9)

Those of us who are alive can still praise *YHVH* and teach His truth, but the implication is clear from these verses that those who are dead are incapable of so doing.

Another figure in Scripture who testifies to the finality of death is Job. Here was a righteous man whom God allowed to be tested by *HaSatan*, the Adversary, to prove that he would continue to love and serve God no matter what terrible things happened to him during his physical life. Since Job is righteous, and he knows he has lived a righteous life and does not deserve the punishment that has befallen him, it would seem that Job would seek for his reward to come in an afterlife. Yet, Job is clear in his understanding that death is the total cessation of life, at least for the time being:

**"Man *who is born of woman*
 Is of few days and full of trouble.
 He comes forth like a flower and fades away;
 He flees like a shadow and does not continue.
 And do You open Your eyes on such a one,
 And bring me to judgment with Yourself?
 Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean?
 No one!
 Since his days *are determined*,
 The number of his months *is with You*;
 You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.
 Look away from him that he may rest,**

**Till like a hired man he finishes his days. ...
 "'But man dies and is laid away;
 Indeed he breathes his last
 And where *is* he?
 As water disappears from the sea,
 And a river becomes parched and dries up,
 So man lies down and does not rise.
 Till the heavens *are no more*,
 They will not awake
 Nor be roused from their sleep.'"** (Job 14:1-6, 10-12)

Job gives us a more complete understanding of *sheol* in chapter ten:

**"'Are not my days few?
 Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a little
 comfort,
 Before I go to the place from which I shall not return,
 To the land of darkness and the shadow of death,
 A land as dark as darkness *itself*,
 As the shadow of death, without any order,
 Where even the light is like darkness.'"** (Job 10:20-22)

Death truly is the complete cessation of life. Light turns to darkness, and memory does not exist as long as one is in that state. However, death does not have to be permanent, for there is the Hope of the Resurrection. But for now let us continue with the subject of the totality of death.

~ What Does the New Testament Say? ~

At this point some might argue that while there was no 'afterlife' for those that lived before *Y'shua*, there is now an afterlife that manifests itself as an immortal soul. Others might claim that the revelation of the Immortality of the Soul took place in a 'progressive' fashion, and that the early writers of the Hebrew Scriptures did not yet understand that the 'soul' was immortal.

Let us examine the words of the Apostle Peter to see if this view is correct. The following statement was made on the day of Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*) after the ascension of *Y'shua* into heaven some ten days previous:

**"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ...
 "'For David did not ascend into the heavens ..."**
 (Acts 2:29, 34)

According to Peter, there is no immortal soul for David, despite the fact that God said of him:

"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22)

Y'shua also confirmed that the soul is not immortal:

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (*gehenna* or hell fire)."
 (Matt. 10:28)

This verse makes it clear that the 'soul' is perishable and can be destroyed by God, even though a casual reading of it

~ The Cause of Death ~

might lead one to think just the opposite. However, what *Y'shua* is saying is that the soul cannot be permanently destroyed by men. God has complete control of something that is called, in our English translations, the 'soul,' and He can destroy that 'soul' if He so chooses.

"For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
(Matt. 16:26)

Once again we see that a 'soul' can be lost. Does this mean that it goes to an ever burning hell for an eternity of torture? If such were the case, that person would still be alive and would never cease to exist, even though his existence would be less than desirable. Or does it mean that the soul can die just like the body?

Y'shua touched on this subject again in the *Parable of the Rich Fool*. Here was a man who had a huge crop harvest, so he tore down his barns and built bigger ones in which to store all of his grain. Building the barns was not the problem, rather the problem was that the man (not acknowledging God) was only concerned with himself. He thought he had it made for many years, and rather than sharing his blessings with others and growing rich toward God, he stored them for himself:

"So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.'"

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'"

"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
(Luke 12:18-21)

Once again, we see that the man's 'soul' was required of him. In other words, he died.

James, or more correctly Jacob, (*Ya'akov* in Hebrew), the brother of *Y'shua* had this to say about the soul:

"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."

(James 5:19-20)

If the soul is immortal there is no need to save it from death, yet here James clearly indicates that the soul can be saved from death.

Finally, we have the following verse from the book of Revelation which also testifies that souls die:

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul died in the sea."
(Rev. 16:3 KJV)

Souls are either living or dead. According to Scripture they are not immortal.

It is important to understand why death exists. Atheists and agnostics often ask; "If there is a God why would He create a world in which babies are born in total innocence, only to die a premature death?"

It is a difficult question to answer when dealing with a skeptic, for the understanding of it requires a confidence and trust (i.e. faith) in *YHVH*; that He knows what He is doing and is in complete control. Since skeptics do not operate in the realm of faith, they usually will not accept a faith based answer. However, we as Believers, need to go back once again to the early chapters of Genesis for our answer:

"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"
(Gen. 2:15-17)

It is important to note that the *Tree of Life* existed in the garden at this time. It was available to Adam and Eve and if they ate of its fruit it would give them eternal life.

"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever' ... "
(Gen. 3:22)

Immortality was available to Adam and Eve through the fruit of the *Tree of Life*, as long as they dwelt in the Garden of Eden. This is why they had to be expelled from the Garden after they had eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree, for God did not want eternal life to be available to them in their fallen condition.

According to Jewish tradition, the reason Adam and Eve did not know they were naked before they sinned was because when they were created they were clothed with the radiance (*kevod* [keh-vohd'] in Hebrew) of God. The initial outcome from their eating of the fruit from the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* was the loss of the *kevod*. At that point they became aware of their nakedness before God and each other. It is thought by some that, in this manner, God revealed to them the fact that they had been created mortal.

Most Christian and Orthodox Jewish theologians believe that death is the punishment for the sin of disobedience. This view was also held by the Apostle Paul (*Shaul*) who wrote to the Romans:

"... that sin reigned in death ..."
(Rom. 5:21a)

"For the wages of sin is death ..."
(Rom. 6:23a)

"I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

"Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was

producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."
(Rom. 7:9-14)

Paul is telling us that it is not the law (*Torah*) which is sin, rather the *Torah* is "holy, just and good." No, the problem is not with the *Torah*, it is with man, for man has a sin nature, which is inherited directly from Adam:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned -- (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.)"
(Rom. 5:12-14)

From this passage we learn that the sin of Adam was considered by God to be a very great transgression. In fact, it was such a great transgression that death was passed on to all mankind because of it; even to those who were considered righteous before God.

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias ... His wife was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."
(Luke 1:5-6)

The fact is that Zacharias and Elizabeth have both died and their bodies are today buried somewhere in the land of Israel despite their 'righteousness.'

"For as in Adam all die ..." (I Cor. 15:22a)

~ Two Deaths ~

The Scriptures clearly indicate that there is not one death but two. The first death comes as a result of Adam's sin, the second comes as a result of our own sins:

"...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ..."
(Rom. 3:23)

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."
(Rev. 2:11)

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."
(Rev. 20:6)

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."
(Rev. 20:14-15)

When we understand that two separate deaths exist, then everything begins to become clear. We already saw that every

human being must die once, not for his own sins but because he has inherited death from his father Adam.

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

(Heb. 11:27-28)

Yes, all men must die once. That is because we are all descended from Adam. But it is not the first death that need be feared, it is the second death which grasps people and holds them in bondage to sin and death. This second death is the end result of our own individual sins, those transgressions which we have piled upon ourselves. It has nothing to do with Adam's original sin:

"Behold, all souls are Mine;

The soul of the father

As well as the soul of the son is Mine;

The soul who sins shall die."

(Ezek. 18:4)

"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

(Ezek. 18:20)

Each man is held accountable for his own sins, and it is those sins, when left unforgiven, that cause men to die the second death:

"But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.

"Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?' says the Lord God, 'and not that he should turn from his ways and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die. ...

"... I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,' says the Lord God. 'Therefore turn and live!'"

(Ezek. 18:21-24, 32)

Now *Y'shua's* statement, quoted previously, comes into focus:

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

(Matt. 10:28)

Other humans can kill us, sending us to our first death; into a grave that is total darkness. But God has promised to raise up from their graves everyone who has lived and died; hence, our 'soul' or life is returned to us at that time. Some of those who are resurrected will be given eternal life, but others will have to

suffer the second death. This is the death of no return, for there is no record in the Scriptures that anyone dying the second death will ever be resurrected a second time. It is the second death that causes both the body and the soul to be forever destroyed, as *Y'shua* indicated in Matt. 10:28 above.

~ Body, Soul, Spirit ~

Armed with these understandings about the nature and cause of death, and about the two deaths, let us now go back and see if we can properly understand the definition of the word soul, as it is used in both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

Actually, there are three different elements that make up a human being; the body, the soul and the spirit, as it is written:

"May the God of *shalom* make you completely holy -- may your entire spirit, soul and body be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord *Y'shua* the Messiah. The one calling you is faithful, and he will do it."

(I Thess. 5:23-24 CJB)

* The Body *

The body is the physical form that we see with our eyes and feel with our hands. It is the flesh, bone, sinew, nerves, glands, blood, etc., which make up the human body. It is all of those things which exist in a body whether it is living or dead. However, in the case of a dead body, all of those physical elements will begin to decay until they are ultimately returned to dust.

* The Soul *

What then is the soul? Again, we need to go back to the second chapter of Genesis to find out:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

(Gen. 2:7 KJV)

The word for 'soul' in Hebrew is *nephesh* (neh'-fehsh, Strong's #5315). It is the life source which causes us to be physically alive rather than dead. What is it that causes the body to live? It is the blood, for when the body ceases to take in oxygen, pass it to the blood and then circulate that blood, the result is death. That is why the Scriptures teach us that:

"... the life of the flesh is in the blood ..." (Lev. 17:11a)

What is most astounding about this verse is that it clearly tells us that the 'soul' or *nephesh* is in the blood. For the word translated 'life' in Lev. 17:11 is the exact same word as the word 'soul' in Genesis 2:7. Both are the Hebrew word *nephesh*, #5315.

When God created Adam, He formed him out of the dust of the ground. Put another way, God formed Adam out of the elements of the earth. He created the tissue, the bone, the sinews, the blood, the glands, the nerves; all of those things which make up the physical human body. Then God breathed the "breath of life" into Adam and Adam became 'alive,' he became a 'living soul' or a 'living being.'

When the body becomes sufficiently traumatized, from either injury or disease, so that it can no longer continue taking in oxygen and circulating it through the blood; then the physical life force (the soul) ceases to function and the body dies. In the process that physical life force, or what is commonly called the 'soul,' also dies. In this respect, man is no different from the animal kingdom, for they too are said to have a *nephesh*, or 'soul.'

"Then God said, 'Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures [*nephesh* or souls] ..."

(Gen. 1:20a)

"Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature [*nephesh* or soul] according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind;' and it was so."

(Gen. 1:24)

"Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life [*nephesh* or soul] ..."

(Gen. 1:30)

So every animated living thing in which there is the breath of life (whether it is in the sea, the air or on the earth), is considered to be a *nephesh*, or a living soul. In respect to our body, and the physical life force that circulates throughout it, we are no different from any other living creature on the earth.

◆ Therefore, the 'soul' or *nephesh* can live:

"Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul [*nephesh*] shall live because of thee."

(Gen. 12:13 KJV)

"Yes, I will make many peoples astonished at you, and their kings shall be horribly afraid of you when I brandish My sword before them; and they shall tremble every moment, every man for his own life [*nephesh* or soul], in the day of your fall."

(Ezek. 32:10)

◆ The 'soul' or *nephesh* can also die:

"And Samson said, 'Let me [*nephesh* or my soul] die with the Philistines!'"

(Judges 16:30a)

◆ The 'soul' or *nephesh* can be killed:

"And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person [*nephesh* or soul], and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day."

(Num. 31:19)

◆ One can ask for the 'soul' or *nephesh* of their enemy:*

"Then God said to him: 'Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life [*days many*] for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life [*nephesh* or soul] of your enemies ..."

(I Kings 3:11)

◆ The 'soul' or *nephesh* can be poured out, as was the 'soul' of our Savior, *Y'shua*:

* However, *Y'shua* taught that if one does not forgive, neither will they be forgiven. (See Matt. 18:32-35 and Luke 6:31-38)

**"Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul [*nephesh*] unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors."**

(Isa. 53:12)

In the New Testament the Greek word from which 'soul' is always translated is *psuche* (sue'-kay, Strong's #5590). This word is used one hundred and four times in the New Testament Scriptures. It is translated as 'soul' fifty-four times and as 'life' a total of forty times. Other translations include 'mind' and 'heart.'

- ◆ The very first time *psuche* is used it has to do with the possible taking of the life of *Y'shua* when He was a child:

"'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life [*psuche* or 'soul'] are dead.'" (Matt. 2:20)

- ◆ The Scriptures teach that *Y'shua* gave His very own 'soul' for His people; those who follow Him:

"...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life [*psuche* or soul] a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28)

"'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life [*psuche* or soul] for the sheep.'" (John 10:11)

- ◆ Since *Y'shua* gave His 'soul' for us, we should be willing to give our 'souls' for our brethren:

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life (*psuche* or soul) for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives [*psuche* or souls] for the brethren." (I John 3:16)

- ◆ Likewise, as Believers we are told by *Y'shua* to lose our 'souls' for His sake.

"'He who finds his life [*psuche* or soul] will lose it, and he who loses his life [*psuche* or soul] for My sake will find it.'" (Matt. 10:39)

It should now be clear that in both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures the 'soul' (*nephesh* or *psuche*) is the living physical body.

The confusion about the nature of the 'soul' has stemmed primarily from the way in which our English Scriptures have been translated. If the translators had used "living being" or "living creature" instead of the word "soul," most of the confusion would disappear. However, since most Bible translators hold to the Greek doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, they tend to write their theology into the Bible translations by using the English word 'soul.'

What then separates man from animal? It can only be the third element of human life, the spirit. It is clear from both the Greek and the Hebrew Scriptures that man has an individual spirit which is all his own:

"For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (I Cor. 2:11a)

**"But there is a spirit in man,
And the breath of the Almighty gives him
understanding."** (Job 32:8)

Once again we are dealing with two words in Greek and Hebrew which are synonymous. The Greek word is *pneuma* (new'-mah, Strong's #4151) and the Hebrew is *ruach* (roo'-ach, Strong's #7307). Both are defined as *breath*, *wind*, or *spirit*. Spirit is used to describe the unseen force which animates every human being. It is this unseen spiritual force that imparts intellect and personality to the individual, as opposed to the 'soul' which imparts life.

At death, the spirit returns to God, while the life or 'soul' ceases to exist and the body decomposes:

"Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed,

Or the golden bowl is broken,

Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,

Or the wheel broken at the well.

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,

And the spirit [*ruach*] will return to God who gave it." (Eccl. 12:6-7)

"For as the body without the spirit [*pneuma*] is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26)

When the lifeblood ceases to flow, the respiratory system shuts down, and the spirit in man returns to the one who gave it (that is God in heaven), then the physical body (along with the life force or 'soul') dies.

Now the question arises; if man does not have an immortal soul, does he have an immortal spirit instead? Is it possible that the concept is correct but the terminology is wrong? In one sense this could be true, for it is clear that the human spirit is something that is given to us by God when we are in the womb and is taken back at death:

"For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." (Luke 1:44)

However, this does not mean that these departed spirits are conscious of their surroundings and of what is happening on earth, for while the spirits of the departed are held within God's care, there is no evidence from the Scriptures that they retain consciousness. On the contrary, it seems apparent they are in a condition that we might liken to dreamless sleep.

One story in the Old Testament which tends to confirm this position is when king Saul went to the witch at En Dor in an attempt to call up the spirit of the prophet Samuel. This was, of course, strictly forbidden by the *Torah*, and had also been forbidden by king Saul himself. However, Saul assured the

witch that she would not be harmed if she conducted a seance for him, so she agreed:

"When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, 'Why have you deceived me? For you *are* Saul!'"

"And the king said to her, 'Do not be afraid. What did you see?' And the woman said to Saul, 'I saw a spirit [*elohim* or gods] ascending out of the earth.'

"So he said to her, 'What *is* his form?' And she said, 'An old man is coming 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 down.

"Now Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?'" (I Sam. 28:12-15a)

If indeed this apparition actually was the 'spirit' of Samuel, it is apparent that the witch had disturbed that 'spirit' from a state of inactivity. However, another possible explanation for this scene is that God sent an angel (fallen or otherwise) to carry the message to Saul that he was to be defeated in battle and would himself suffer death. The fact that the term *elohim* (which means 'gods' and which sometimes refers to angels [see Psalm 8:5]) is used to identify what came up, (instead of *ruach* which means 'spirit'); and the fact that it came up out of the ground, seems to point to the later explanation.

Another passage that is often used to 'prove' the Immortality of the Soul is found when the fifth seal is opened in the book of Revelation:

"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls [*psuche*] of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"

"And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*" (Rev. 6:9-11)

While this seems to be a compelling case for the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, it can also be read as an analogy similar to the one found in Genesis chapter 4, where God speaks about the "blood" of Abel crying out from the ground:

"And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'" (Gen. 4:10)

Obviously blood does not speak, and, in all likelihood, neither do the 'souls' or 'spirits' of dead men and women, but both can be used in a metaphorical sense to communicate a profound spiritual image.

~ Death is Like Sleep ~

A number of scriptures liken death to being asleep:

**"Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes,
Lest I sleep the *sleep of death*;"** (Psalm 13:3)

"And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? For now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I *shall not be*."

(Job 7:21 KJV)

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep (lie down) with thy fathers" (Deut. 31:16 KJV)

Some view the phrase ("lie down with thy fathers"), along with those passages which speak of being "gathered to his people" (see Gen. 49: 33), as indicating the collecting of the deceased person's immortal soul to those of one's departed relatives. However, in actual fact, it has to do with ancient burial practices. It was the custom, when someone died, to first place their body in a sarcophagus. This was a box much like a modern coffin, although it was usually carved out of stone. However, since the body was not embalmed, the flesh would rapidly decay. Once all the flesh was gone, and only the bones remained, they would be gathered up and placed in a smaller container called an ossuary. Often times, ossuaries contained the bones of other family members as well. Thus, one was gathered to (the bones of) his fathers.

~ The Revivified Spirit ~

It appears that God somehow preserves each person's 'spirit' and uses it to revivify a resurrected body and soul. Some have likened the storing of the spirit to the storage of music on a magnetic tape or compact disk (CD). The information on the cassette or CD is not available to hear (i.e., does not have a personality) unless one has the appropriate machine (i.e., 'body') on which to play it. However, once the tape or disk is placed in a proper playing device (the 'body'), and the device is activated by an energy source (the 'soul'), then the information (the 'spirit') comes alive, and the entire room can be filled with music.

It may be somewhat the same with man's spirit. Somehow God stores the spirits (intellect, memory and personality) of those who have died, although we do not know how it is done. They are silent now, but at some future time those spirits will be reunited with their resurrected bodies and souls, and the world will once again be filled with the sounds of their voices and the force of their personalities. This is the *Hope of the Resurrection*.

~ Summary ~

Let us see if we can summarize the nature of life and death in a reasonably succinct manner.

- ◆ Life originated from God. He gave it and it is His prerogative to extend it or take it away.
- ◆ Death is the absence of life.

- ◆ Death first entered the world because of the sin of Adam. This death (the first death) is passed on to all human descendants of the male line of Adam. This includes both men and women, since both have physical fathers.
- ◆ Man is made up of three parts:
 - The physical body is composed of flesh and bone, and it decays after death.
 - The soul is the physical life source that activates the body. The Scriptures teach that the 'soul' is in the blood. Once the blood ceases to flow, the 'soul' or life goes out of the body. The 'soul,' as defined by Scripture, has no thought or personality unto itself.
 - The spirit is the unseen animating force which is given by God to each individual. It is what imbues each person with intellect, personality, emotions, etc. The spirit returns to God upon death and exists in an unconscious state, similar to sleep, until the time when God resurrects the body and the soul. At that time God releases the spirit to indwell the new living body.
- ◆ Although the fullness of the law was not codified until Mount Sinai, there has always been some form of God's law (*Torah* or instruction) taught on earth. We know this because it is written: "**...because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws [Torah].**" (Gen. 26:5) It is the individual's breaking of God's law (*Torah*) which makes every person subject to the second death.
- ◆ It was into this seemingly hopeless situation that *Y'shua* was sent, by His Father, to become a Savior and Redeemer for all mankind.
- ◆ Since *Y'shua* did not descend from Adam through a physical father, he was not subject to the first death which comes only from Adam.
- ◆ Because *Y'shua* lived a perfectly sinless life, He was not subject to the second death which comes from one's own sin; the transgression of the *Torah*.
- ◆ However, *Y'shua* voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of all mankind. Normally those sins would have made Him susceptible to the second (permanent) death, however, since He was not descended from Adam through a male progenitor, *Y'shua's* would be 'second death' became His 'first' and only death; a death which could not hold him in the grave.
- ◆ All who have ever lived and died (with the exception of the Son of God, *Y'shua*) are now sleeping in their graves, while their individual spirits, retained by God in heaven, are awaiting the resurrection.

"So when corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'

**""O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?""** (I Cor. 15:54-55)

At the appropriate time, God will resurrect to life every single individual who has ever lived. That is the subject of the next article: *The Hope of the Resurrection*.

We pray this article has been a blessing to you by bringing you a Scriptural understanding of life and death, and of the three components of human life: body, soul and spirit.

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"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:56-57)

~ The Hope of the ~ ~ Resurrection ~

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Who according to His abundant mercy
Has begotten us again to a living hope
Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled
And that does not fade away,
Reserved in heaven for you.
1 Peter 1:3-4

In the preceding chapter we explored the Scriptures pertaining to three common theories concerning death: The Cessation of Life, The Immortality of the Soul and Reincarnation. In that article, we learned that at death the body is consigned to a place called *sheol*, which is synonymous to the grave, and that the 'soul' is not immortal, but is merely the physical life force which is contained within the living blood. We concluded that death is the cessation of life, and that it takes the individual into a state of unconscious darkness similar to dreamless sleep.

However, it also became apparent that a third element, the spirit in man, is what imparts personality, emotion and intellect to an individual, and that it is man's spirit, given by God, that returns to Him for safe keeping once the body and soul cease to live.

In this chapter we will explore what happens when a dead body is resurrected; how the body is reconstituted, and how the 'spirit,' which was returned to God for safe keeping, is rejoined to the resurrected body causing the once dead individual to live again with all of their memories and faculties. We will also focus on the two resurrections and the two deaths, as well as the judgment which must fall upon all men.

~ What Is Resurrection? ~

The Scriptural method for obtaining the afterlife is through resurrection. This means that the body is reconstituted and given life, either in physical or spiritual form, along with the thoughts, emotions, intellect, and personality of the formerly dead individual. Some teach that only the righteous will receive a resurrected body, while others teach that all men will be resurrected, some to a life of bliss in heaven, others to a life of cruelty in hell.

Two differing beliefs of resurrection are commonly held:

- ◆ One belief popular among both Christians and Jews, is that the 'immortal soul' is reunited with the resurrected body and given eternal life.
- ◆ A second belief is that the entire person is resurrected; body, soul and spirit. As we will see, this is the view that is most in line with the teachings of the Scriptures.

Resurrection is the reconstitution of the body, where the reactivating of the soul (to bring the body back to life), and the return of the spirit causes the resurrected individual to become

similar to his pre-death existence. When the new body is reconstituted as a spirit body, with a spirit soul or life force, then the individual is apparently also capable of manifesting him/herself in a physical manner. This phenomena was shown to us by *Y'shua* when he appeared to His disciples after His resurrection:

"But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?'"

"So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence."

(Luke 24:41-43)

~ The Hope of the Resurrection ~

The New Testament is brimming over with scriptures that teach about the resurrection of *Y'shua HaMashiach* and of the coming resurrection of the dead.

"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (I Cor. 15:12)

If the Corinthians believed in eternal life, but did not believe in the resurrection, then they may well have held to the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul. This seems to be a logical conclusion, since the Corinthian gentiles were steeped in pagan practices and Greek philosophy. Paul counteracts this doctrine by saying that if there is no resurrection from death, then all those who died have permanently perished and are without hope:

"But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up -- in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

(I Cor. 15:13-19)

Because our hope is in the resurrection, it is our firm belief that those who have "fallen asleep in Christ" (those who have died in Messiah) have not perished forever, rather we believe that their spirit is currently held in the custody of our Father in heaven until that day when He sends His Son to raise the righteous dead and fetch His Bride for a heavenly wedding:

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ...

"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are Christ's* at His coming."

(I Cor. 15:20, 23)

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

"Therefore comfort one another with these words."
(I Thess. 4:13-18)

In the Hebrew Scriptures (especially the *Torah*), the emphasis is more toward receiving rewards for obedience in this life, rather than in the world to come. However, there are a handful of Scriptures in other portions of the *Tanakh* (Tah-nahk = Old Testament) which also clearly state that a resurrection of the dead is to take place at some time in the future. For example:

**"And He will destroy on this mountain
The surface of the covering cast over all people,
And the veil that is spread over all nations.
"He will swallow up death forever,
And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces;
The rebuke of His people
He will take away from all the earth;
For the LORD has spoken."** (Isa. 25:7-8)

This passage is somewhat elusive, but it seems to indicate a universal resurrection to life.

The next passage is a very personal one. Here the prophet Isaiah looks forward to the day of his own resurrection. This verse seems to point to the first resurrection (more on that later), which will be more limited in scope than the second:

**"Your dead shall live;
Together with my dead body they shall arise.
Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;
For your dew is like the dew of herbs,
And the earth shall cast out the dead."** (Isa. 26:19)

The prophet Daniel is much more explicit about the coming resurrection of the dead:

**"At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of
your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book,
And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth
shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.
Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever."** (Dan. 12:1-3)

It seems that Job also foresaw an eventual resurrection, although the translators do not agree on exactly what he said. The New King James Version translates as follows:

**"For I know *that* my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God."** (Job 19:25-26)

Dr. David Stern, in his new translation, *The Complete Jewish Bible* (CJB), renders this passage differently:

**"... so that after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then even without my flesh, I will see God."** (Job 19:26)

The Jewish Publication Society's (JPS) *Tanakh* has this rendering:

**"But I know that my Vindicator lives;
In the end He will testify on earth --
This, after my skin will have been peeled off.
But I would behold God while still in my flesh,
I myself, not another, would behold Him;
Would see with my own eyes:
My heart pines within me."** (Job 19:25-27)

In the JPS translation it seems as though Job is referring to seeing his 'Vindicator' during his then current physical life, while the NKJV clearly indicates a death and resurrection back to physical life. One thing sure, Job knew he was going to see God at some time in the future, although he (and the translators) may not have understood exactly when or how.

~ First Century Understanding ~

By *Y'shua's* day it was well established, among the sect of the Pharisees, that the resurrection was an actual coming event. However, the Sadducees only accepted the *Torah* (first five books of the Bible) as authentic Scripture, so they did not believe in a resurrection, since the *Torah* nowhere speaks of one. Whether or not they believed in the Immortality of the Soul is not clear, but it is a possibility that some of them may have held that belief, since some of the Sadducees were involved in the Hellenistic practices of the day, and that concept may have worked its way into their belief system. If this were the case, then Paul's hearing before the *Sanhedrin* takes on additional meaning:

"But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!'"

"And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For *the* Sadducees say that there is no resurrection -- and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." (Acts 23:6-8)

Y'shua also addressed this controversy, concerning the resurrection, as recorded in the following passage:

"The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying:

"Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.'

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'

"And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching." (Matt. 22:23-33)

Once again it looks like a case for the Immortality of the Soul. However, if we believe that the Scriptures do not contradict themselves, then we must take into account that King David (a man after God's own heart and of a status similar to that of the Patriarchs) is both dead and buried:

"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ...

"For David did not ascend into the heavens ..."
(Acts 2:29, 34a)

~ Two Deaths ~

The explanation of these seemingly contradicting passages lies in the fact that the Scriptures speak of both two resurrections and two deaths. Currently, the spirits of those who have died are with the Father in heaven, and are in a condition where resurrection is assured, for they have only experienced the first death. In that respect all those who have died could be considered to be 'alive,' in the sense that they have not yet experienced the permanent or second death, even though they are in a state of unconsciousness, i.e., when a person is asleep he is unconscious but is still alive).

However, once a person experiences the second death, resurrection is no longer available to them. God has apparently set a limit, and the first death does not pass that limit, but the second death does. Thus, we see that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, having not experienced the second death, are still eligible for resurrection to eternal life. This would also explain what *Y'shua* meant when He said:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."
(John 8:51)

Y'shua clarifies this verse with another, where He indicates that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are currently residing in *sheol* awaiting their resurrection:

"Now even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord "the God

of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."
(Luke 20:37-38)

In other words, to God all those who ever lived are still as though they were alive, because He has the power to resurrect them according to His timing and will.

"That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun."
(Eccl. 1:9)

~ Two Resurrections ~

Likewise, much of the confusion about resurrection clears up when it is understood that the Scriptures teach two resurrections, not just one:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [*First Resurrection*]

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. [*Second Resurrection*] This is the first resurrection." [*The one mentioned in the previous paragraph.*]
(Rev. 20:4-5)

~ The First Resurrection ~

"Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."
(Rev. 20:6)

It is a great honor to be counted worthy of a place in the first resurrection. This resurrection is called by *Y'shua* 'the resurrection of the just':

"When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor *your* rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."
(Luke 14:12-14)

The first resurrection is to a spirit life, not a physical one, and its recipients are no longer susceptible to death:

"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."
(Luke 20:34-36)

Since those in the first resurrection can no longer die, that which was mortal has now become immortal:

"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?'

"Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain -- perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. ...

"The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, 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 became a living being.' The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made of dust*; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven.

**"As *was* the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as *is* the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."
(I Cor. 15:35-38, 42-49)**

At death, the human body becomes, in analogy, like a seed of grain that is planted in the earth. What grows out of that seed looks nothing like the seed itself. For example, a corn stalk does not at all resemble a corn seed. However, eventually there is fruit born of that new plant, which does look exactly like the seed that was planted.

Even so, our physical body will disappear just like a corn seed that has been planted in the earth. If you dig up a corn plant you will not find the original seed, it is gone. However, from that tiny seed a great plant grows. Paul likens this physical life process of plants to the resurrection. We are buried in a physical state and our bodies disappear into dust. Those revived in the first resurrection are raised up not with physical, but with spiritual bodies. It is very important to notice that Paul says we will have spirit bodies. We do not become disembodied spirits:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'

**"'O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?'**

"The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

knowing that your labor *is* not in vain in the Lord."

(I Cor. 15:50-58)

The mystery of the resurrection, an event that defies all known science, is not just in the raising of the dead, it is also in the changing of those who are still alive in the flesh from mortal physical human beings into spirit beings, both groups becoming children of the Living God.

The first resurrection is also known as the 'better resurrection' and is spoken of in the great 'Faith Chapter' of Hebrews:

"And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."

(Heb. 11:35b)

~ Obtaining the First Resurrection ~

Our resurrection to spirit life is possible only because *Y'shua* took upon Himself our sins (which would otherwise have led to our being subject to the second death), and suffered death in our stead. Because *Y'shua* did not sin He was not liable to die the second death Himself. Since *Y'shua's* father was God (He was not descended through the male line from Adam) neither was He subject to the first death (see previous chapter: *The Sting of Death*).

The Scriptures teach that the only way to obtain the first resurrection is through acceptance of *Y'shua* as our personal Savior and Messiah. His atoning sacrifice (He willingly gave Himself to suffer death in our stead) pays the full penalty for all of our sins and frees us from the second death, the permanent death.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."
(Eph. 2:8-9)

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."
(Rom. 6:5-6)

"But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

(Phil. 3:8-11)

Even though we have been freed from the second death, each one of us must still suffer the first death, because we are descended from Adam through our male line. However, we no longer have to fear the ultimate death; the eternal, second death.

When *Y'shua* went to visit Martha and Mary, after their brother Lazarus died, He said to Martha:

"... **'Your brother will rise again.'**

"Martha said to Him, **'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'**

"Jesus said to her, **'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. ...'**

(John 11:23-26)

Here again we see *Y'shua* promising that those who accept Him as Messiah and Savior will not die permanently. This is true because *Y'shua*, being perfect in the flesh and also being the Son of God, has already been resurrected to an eternal spirit life.

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know -- ... whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

(Acts 2:22, 24)

Y'shua has been taken up to heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father, awaiting the time when He will be sent by the Father to return for His Bride.

"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

**"The LORD said to my Lord,
Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."**

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

(Acts 2:29-36)

Having become victorious over death, *Y'shua* now sits at the right hand of the Father so that Believers have a high priest who can mediate with the Father on their behalf.

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

(Heb. 12:22-24)

Here we see that those who have died in the faith, and are awaiting the first resurrection, are said to be 'spirits,' 'registered in heaven.'

~ The Second Resurrection ~

"But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. ..." (Rev. 20:5a)

While the first resurrection is the resurrection to eternal life, the second resurrection, which takes place one thousand years later, has the potential of ending in eternal death, for it is a resurrection to physical life not to a spirit life. A major passage that has to do with this physical second resurrection is found in the famous "dry bones" passage of Ezekiel 37:

"The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry."

"And He said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD God to these bones; 'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'"

"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them."

"Then He said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"

"So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."

"Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'"

"Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,' says the LORD.'" (Ezek. 37:1-14)

Many scholars view this passage as having nothing at all to do with a literal resurrection of the dead. They teach that the entire passage is a metaphor for the return of the house of Israel to the land of Israel. However, armed with the understanding that Scripture teaches two separate resurrections, not just one, the resurrection pictured here seems clearly to be the second

resurrection, the one in which all people who ever lived (including those of the house of Israel who are not in the first resurrection) will be resurrected to a physical existence. There is no reason why this passage (like many others in Scripture) cannot have both a literal and a metaphorical meaning.

~ Judgment ~

According to the Scriptures, everyone who has ever lived will eventually be judged:

"... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment ..." (Heb. 9:27)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (II Cor. 5:10)

Those in the first resurrection were judged during their own lifetime:

"For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and *if it begins with us first*, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now,

**'If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'**

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." (I Pet. 4:17-19)

Those who are not a part of the first resurrection, will experience a physical (second) resurrection, of indeterminate length, during which time their judgment will take place:

"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged each one according to his works."

(Rev. 20:13)

Occasionally, we hear Believers questioning the conversion of other Believers, usually because they do not hold all of the same doctrinal beliefs as the accuser. Brethren, this ought not to be so. It is our Father in heaven and His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, who are responsible to judge both our conversion and our works.

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written:

**'As I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God.'**

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:10-12)

~ Great White Throne Judgment ~

Those who are given physical life in the second resurrection will face what is commonly called the 'Great White Throne Judgment:'

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who 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, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

(Rev. 20:11-13)

There are a number of interpretations concerning what constitutes the 'books' which are opened for this judgment. The only book actually identified in Scripture is the *Book of Life*. Some believe the other books mentioned here are all of the books of the Bible.

Another view, from Jewish teaching, has to do with three books which are said to be opened each year during the high holydays of *Rosh HaShanah* (Rohsh ' = Feast of Trumpets) and *Yom Kippur* (Yohm Key-poor' = Day of Atonement). They are: the *Book of Life*, the *Book of Death*, and the *Book of the Intermediates*. It is said that on *Rosh HaShanah* all of the totally righteous have their names inscribed in the *Book of Life* for the coming year. Meanwhile, the totally wicked have their names inscribed in the *Book of Death*, while everyone else (the vast majority of people) have their names inscribed in the *Book of the Intermediates*. Those who have their names in this last book have until *Yom Kippur* (ten days away in the yearly cycle) to reconcile with both God and their fellow man so that their names can be transferred to the *Book of Life*. If they fail to do so during this time period (called the *Days of Awe*) their names will be moved to the *Book of Death* at the close of *Yom Kippur*. (For more details see the *Hebrew Roots* Special Publication: *The High Holydays*.)

We believe this Jewish teaching is an annual 'rehearsal' for great events that are yet to come, and believe these events are clearly laid out in the passage of Scripture commonly known as The 'Great White Throne Judgment,' found in Revelation 20. Following is a summary of how the functioning of these three books takes place:

- ◆ At the time of their first death, every person will have their name written into one of the three books:
- ◆ *The Book of Life*: Those who were made totally righteous by the blood of Messiah during their lifetime, will have their names written into the *Book of Life*. They will be resurrected to eternal life at the beginning of the one thousand year period. This resurrection of the righteous will take place when *Y'shua* returns for His Bride at the 'Last Trump,' which is a euphemism for *Rosh HaShanah*.
- ◆ *The Book of Death*: Those who were deemed by God to be totally wicked, during their lifetime, will have their names written into the *Book of Death*. These are the people for whom there is absolutely no hope, for they knew the Scriptures yet continued in blatant sin.
- ◆ *The Book of the Intermediates*: All of the remaining people, not found in the first two categories (the vast majority of people), will have their names inscribed into the *Book of the Intermediates* at the time of their

death. Their fate will be determined at the time of 'The Great White Throne Judgment.'

At the end of the Millennium two major events occur:

1.) The rest of the dead (those not raised in the first resurrection) will be resurrected back to a physical life.

2.) *HaSatan* is released "for a little while" (Rev. 20:3), and He will once again go forth to deceive the nations. Those nations will consist of the billions of people who have come up in the second resurrection and may also include people who were alive during the thousand year period. The armies of Gog and Magog will eventually be gathered together to battle the saints at Jerusalem:

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem]. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (Rev. 20:7-9)

It is after this event that *HaSatan* will be taken captive once again, this time to be cast into the Lake of Fire.

"And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are [were cast]. And ... will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev. 20:10)

It is also after this war that the three books will be opened and a final judgment will be made, based on what the people of the second resurrection chose to do during the period when all of those events took place. In reality they will have only two choices:

- ◆ To follow the instructions (*Torah*) of God as taught by the King Messiah, *Y'shua*. These will be the people who resisted *HaSatan*, reconciled themselves with God, and made peace with their enemies. They will have their names transferred from the *Book of the Intermediates* into the *Book of Life*.
- ◆ To follow *HaSatan* into rebellion. These will be the people who have rejected *Y'shua* as King of kings and Lord of lords. They will find their names transferred into the *Book of Death*.

When this judgment is finished no one will have their name left written in the *Book of the Intermediates*; all will be either in the *Book of Life* or the *Book of Death*.

"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15)

~ *HaSatan's Judgment* ~

Not only will all the people who have ever lived be judged, the Adversary, *HaSatan* will also be required to go through two

judgments. The first judgment occurs at the beginning of the Millennium:

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."

(Rev. 20:1-3)

This initial judgment binds *HaSatan* for one thousand years, during which time he will be unable to deceive anyone. But after the thousand years are completed he will be loosed again for a short period of time. Once loosed, *HaSatan* will again take up the business of deceiving:

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea." (Rev. 20:7-8)

It is evident that an enormous number of people will be alive on earth at this time. If our estimates are correct, the earth's population following the second resurrection will run in the billions. Even though *HaSatan* will succeed in deceiving many of these people, ultimately his efforts will once again be thwarted. His last gamble will be to bring a huge army of deceived nations against the saints at Jerusalem:

"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (Rev. 20:9)

Following his abortive war, *HaSatan* will be brought for his second judgment. It appears this judgment will occur just prior to the Great White Throne Judgment of men. Perhaps it is the very first sentence that is passed down at that judgment:

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

Please note that the word '*are*' in the next to last sentence of the previous passage, is an added word. Many translations add the word '*were*' at that point, instead of '*are*.' The implication, of this latter rendering is that the 'beast' and the 'false prophet,' who are human, were burned up in the fire and do not exist permanently in a state of torment, as does the 'devil.' Also, *The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon* by Wigram-Green, translates the phrase "they will be tormented" as "shall be tormented," thus showing that the translation does not imply that the 'beast' and 'false prophet' are alive in the 'lake of fire.' Thus, another legitimate translation of this passage might be:

"And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the

false prophet were cast, *and he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.*"

The Adversary would like us to believe that human beings will receive the punishment that is reserved for him. However, our God is a merciful God who takes no delight in the torture of those who do not wish to follow His righteous way of life, as delineated in the *Torah*. Rather, God, being merciful, will put those rebellious people out of their misery by consigning them to the 'second death,' a permanent absence of life.

~ Who Will Judge? ~

The Scriptures also indicate that those who have their part in the first resurrection will be involved in the judging process.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?"
(I Cor. 6:1-3)

Of course, as we have already seen, the final decisions will fall to the Father and the Son.

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."
(Acts 17:30-31)

~ The End of an Age ~

This brings us to the conclusion of this age. According to Jewish tradition, the total time that men will exist in a physical state on the earth is seven thousand years. The first six thousand years have been given over to man's rule, under the influence and deception of *HaSatan*, the Adversary. The last one thousand year period (commonly called the Millennium) will be the time when the King Messiah (*Y'shua*) will reign on the earth and *HaSatan* will be chained in the bottomless pit.

It is clear that the final (Great White Throne) judgment period takes place following the Millennium, and is for an indeterminate period of time. However, it seems that it must be of some fair length of time in order for the Adversary to once again create enough deception in the world so that men will be willing to join the armies which will be formed to come against Jerusalem.

~ The Death of Death ~

The last event of this era is the death of death, when death and hell (or the grave) will be also be cast into the Lake of Fire, never more to exist among those who remain alive after the two resurrections.

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."
(Rev. 20:14)

This concept is given additional support by the Apostle John when he writes about what he saw concerning the new heaven and the new earth:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."
(Rev. 21:1-4)

However, there are some people who will not have a part in this most blessed era:

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
(Rev. 21:7-8)

And so, the Book of Revelation echoes what the prophets Isaiah and Hosea said centuries earlier:

**"And He will destroy on this mountain
The surface of the covering cast over all people,
And the veil that is spread over all nations.
He will swallow up death forever,
And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces;
The rebuke of His people
He will take away from all the earth;
For the LORD has spoken.**

**"And it will be said in that day:
'Behold, this *is* our God;
We have waited for Him, and He will save us.**

**This *is* the LORD;
We have waited for Him;
We will be glad and rejoice in His
salvation [*yeshuah*]."**
(Isaiah 25:7-9)

**"I will ransom them from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death.
O Death, I will be your plagues!
O Grave, I will be your destruction!
Pity is hidden from My eyes."**
(Hosea 13:14)

~ A New Beginning ~

Now the Messiah and His Bride come to dwell in their brand new home.

"Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'"
(Rev. 21:5)

The Scriptures seem to suggest that everyone found alive at this period of time will be housed in spirit bodies rather than physical ones. Yet, the earth itself, and the New Jerusalem, seem still to be made of the physical:

"And the construction of its wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: ..." (Rev. 21:18-19a)

Of course, this could just be a physical description of a spirit city, so that we, (currently still physical beings) can understand to some degree what a city composed of spirit essence will be like. Let us all pray that we will have a place in the New Jerusalem.

"And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.'" (Rev. 21:6-7)

~ Summary ~

This brings to a conclusion our efforts to understand death and resurrection. Let us see if we can summarize the resurrection portion of this study in a reasonably succinct manner.

- ◆ *Y'shua*, being descended through His male line from God the father instead of Adam, was not susceptible to the first death. (See previous chapter.) Likewise, since *Y'shua* lived a sinless life, He was not condemned to the second death.
- ◆ By taking our sins upon Himself, *Y'shua* subjected Himself to the second death for all mankind. However, death could not hold Him because He was both sinless and the Son of God.
- ◆ God the Father resurrected *Y'shua* from the sleep of death after three days and nights in the grave, during which time His body and soul were dead and His Spirit was with God.
- ◆ By coming into a covenant relationship with *Y'shua*, as His betrothed Bride (by accepting Him as our husband and Messiah), we become one with Him and therefore vicarious partakers of His death. This eliminates the need for us to experience the 'second death' as 'wages' for our sins and removes the hold of death from us. (See Romans 6:23) This is pure grace!
- ◆ Because *Y'shua* was resurrected to life from the grave, we too have already been 'spiritually' resurrected from the grave of our second death, and will never need to actually experience it. Thus, eternal life is figuratively already present in us.
- ◆ Each person, who is in Messiah, will still have to experience the first death.
 - Those who are dead in Messiah will be resurrected to eternal spirit life as the Bride of Messiah, at His coming.

- Those who are blessed to still be alive when *Y'shua* returns to fetch His Bride (at the first resurrection) will be able to bypass the first death and have their physical bodies immediately changed into spirit.
- ◆ The rest of the dead (the vast majority of people) will be resurrected to a physical life at the end of the one thousand year period. *HaSatan*, the Adversary, will be loosed from the bottomless pit at the same time.
- ◆ An indeterminate period of time will occur during which *HaSatan* will once again attempt to deceive those who have been brought up in this second resurrection.
- ◆ A rebellion will occur which will cause the armies of Gog and Magog to attack Jerusalem.
- ◆ Once this rebellion has been quelled, *HaSatan* will be cast into the Lake of Fire and rendered unable to deceive anyone ever again.
- ◆ Those who were resurrected to a physical life (the second resurrection) will be judged according to their works. Some will be rewarded with eternal life while others will be condemned to the second death.
- ◆ The present earth will then be replaced by a new heaven and new earth where death will no longer exist.

~ Hope for Loved Ones ~

All of us should receive a great deal of comfort from what God has planned for those who have already died. Consider our loved ones who have died without knowing *Y'shua* as their personal Lord and Savior. Are they forever 'lost' to an eternity of torture in hellfire even though they were not totally 'wicked' people? Granted, they were sinners, for:

"... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ..." (Rom. 3:23)

But if God did not call them, or if He actually blinded their eyes so they could not see *Y'shua* as their Savior; is that their fault, or is God the responsible party? For it is written:

"Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,

Lest they should see with their eyes

And understand with their heart,

Lest they should turn, so that I should heal them.'

(John 12:39-40)

In these cases we believe that God is the One who is responsible, and that He has a plan whereby everyone who ever lived will be given the opportunity to obtain eternal life. The requirements for this being their willing submission to the Father (as God and ruler of the universe) and *Y'shua*, His Son (as Lord and Savior), submitting to His rulership by becoming obedient to the rules of His house. When these prerequisites

are met, God will change their hearts and they will come to desire a life without sin (i.e. a *Torah* lifestyle) for all eternity.

Some may say this teaching gives people a "second chance," which is not possible if this is the only 'day' of salvation, as it seems to be written:

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."
(II Cor. 6:2b)

However, please note the literal translation of this verse reads: "*Behold, now a time acceptable; behold now a day of salvation -- ...*" This is definitely "a" day of salvation, but it is not "the only" day of salvation.

The point is, if God has not called someone, or if He had actually blinded their eyes to the truth, then the Great White Throne Judgment will be their very first and only day of salvation. It is our contention that at the period of time known as the 'Great White Throne Judgment,' those who's names have been written in the *Book of the Intermediates* will receive their very first opportunity to have their names transferred into the *Book of Life*.

Hallelujah!!!

~ Finally ~

It is not our expectation that everyone will readily accept this understanding of life, death and resurrection. All of us are learning, and no one, including us here at *Hebrew Roots*, have all the answers. However, we believe what we have written squares with what the Scriptures teach.

Sometimes old beliefs die hard. However, if you have been living with an unbiblical belief system, then we encourage you to replace it with what the Scriptures teach, for:

**"To everything *there is a season,*
A time for every purpose under heaven: ...
A time to keep,
And a time to throw away ..."** (Eccl. 3:1, 6b)

Over the past several years we too have had to change our view on a number of our long held unbiblical beliefs and, no doubt, in the future will have to do so again, as *YHVH* reveals more truth to us. However, when it comes to a statement of what exactly is our hope for the future, we must say that it truly is:

THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION!!!

May each one of you reading this article be one of "those who are Messiah's at His coming."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Who Has Ascended? ~

No one has ascended to heaven
But He who came down from heaven,
That is, the Son of Man
Who is in heaven.
John 3:13



Today, it is commonly believed that when a person dies they go to heaven (unless they are very wicked, then they go to hell). This concept is taught, not only in Christendom, but throughout the secular world as well. However, *Y'shua* said:

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."
(John 3:13)

"And the Father Himself, who sent Me has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form."
(John 5:37)

The Apostle Peter testified that not even king David, whom God loved as a man after His own heart, has ascended into heaven:

"For David did not ascend into the heavens ..."
(Acts 2:34)

So why the controversy?

The three Scriptural episodes that most readily call into question the teaching that death is the cessation of life, are the stories about Enoch, Elijah, and the parable of *Lazarus and the Rich Man*. A cursory reading of each one of these stories tends to support the idea that all three men are currently alive and well in heaven. And, of course, if they are, then it stands to reason that all of the other righteous men and women who ever lived, and subsequently died, must also be alive and well in heaven.

But is this true? Is this what the Scriptures really teach? Or are there some misunderstandings about these stories that need to be clarified? In this chapter we will examine all three of these stories, as they are set forth in Scripture, and see if what is commonly believed about these men is really supported by Scriptural evidence.

Before beginning, it is important to point out that the first chapter in this issue: *The Sting of Death*, and the second chapter: *The Hope of the Resurrection*, examine a number of Scriptures which testify to the fact that the soul of man can and does die, and that the spirit of man remains in an unconscious sleep like state until it is resurrected. It is upon the foundation of these two chapters that this one has been written.

Let us first examine the story of Elijah being taken up in a Chariot of Fire:

"And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ...

"Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."
(II Kings 2:1, 11)

Well, it certainly says that Elijah was taken up into heaven by a 'whirlwind,' or Chariot of Fire. But a question needs to be asked; What is the correct definition of 'heaven?' According to the Scriptures, heaven is a created place:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
(Gen. 1:1)

Notice that God created more than one heaven, for it says clearly that He created heavens, plural. In fact, in Hebrew every usage of the word heaven is in the plural form (shamaim = shaw-mah-eem'). The root word (shama = shaw-mah'), which is singular, is never used.

The Apostle Paul confirms the existence of more than one heaven when he relates the story of someone (we know not whom but presume it was Paul himself) being taken up into one of them:

"... I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago -- whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows -- such a one was caught up to the third heaven."
(II Cor. 12:1-2)

According to Jewish tradition there are not just three heavens, rather there are seven, and some writings indicate the number to be ten. It is very interesting to note that the third heaven (of the supposed seven) is said to be 'Paradise.' This squares exactly with what Paul relates about his visionary experience:

"And I know such a man -- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows -- how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."
(II Cor. 12:3-4)

If one wishes to stick strictly with the Scriptures (always the safest course), it is clear there exists three 'heavens.' The first heaven would probably be the atmosphere that surrounds the earth; the air in which the birds and airplanes fly, and which contains the oxygen so necessary to sustain life. The second heaven could well be classified as outer space; the seemingly limitless area that exists between the planets and the stars, but which cannot sustain oxygen breathing creatures. Presumably, the third heaven would be the one in which God exists; a nonphysical place that might well be very near to us, but which cannot be seen with physical, human eyes. This is likely the place of which it is written:

**"The LORD is in His holy temple,
The LORD's throne is in heaven."** (Psalm 11:4a)

Some feel that the heaven in which God dwells exists in the northern sky. They base this teaching on a verse from Isaiah which depicts *Lucifer* attempting to exalt himself over the throne of God:

**"For you have said in your heart:
I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;"** (Isa. 14:13)

Returning to the story of Elijah, it is written that Elijah was taken up into heaven. However, the story about Elijah and the Chariot of Fire does not say that he died, for (as we shall see) the Scriptures show that it was not possible that Elijah could have died at this time. This being the case, it could mean that he was taken up into the atmosphere of the earth (the first heaven), similar to the place where modern airplanes fly, and transported to another earthly location.

~ Elijah's Great Escape ~

In order to establish the fact that Elijah was still alive on earth after being taken up in the Chariot of Fire, we must examine the line of kings for both Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom), during the period known as the Divided Monarchy.

We pick up the story with king *Ahab* of Israel. He is considered to be the worst king Israel had in their approximately 240 years as a nation. It was primarily during his reign that Elijah functioned as a prophet. King *Ahab* had a son named *Ahaziah* who became co-regnant with his father *Ahab*. This happened in the:

"... seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah ..."
(I Kings 22:51)

Shortly after *Ahaziah* became co-regnant, his father, king *Ahab*, died leaving *Ahaziah* to be the sole king over Israel (I Kings 22:37, 40). But king *Ahaziah* had a very short reign. He fell ill and sent servants to inquire of *Baal-zebul* as to whether or not he would recover, but God sent Elijah the Prophet to intercept the messengers and tell them *YHVH* had determined that he was to die:

"So Ahaziah (the king of Israel) died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. Because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah."
(II Kings 1:17)

Prior to this time, a different man, also named *Jehoram* (this one the son of king *Jehoshaphat* of Judah) also began a co-regnant reign with his father, in the kingdom of Judah. So now there are two kings, one in Israel and one in Judah, both named Jehoram.

Despite the confusion of having two kings with the same name, plus the co-regnant years in both kingdoms, the

Scriptures are clear that king *Jehoshaphat* was still in power in Judah when Elisha performed his first act as a prophet:

"But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?' And one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, 'Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.'"
(II Kings 3:11)

This verse indicates that Elijah's ride in the Chariot of Fire must have taken place prior to the death of king *Jehoshaphat*, because his successor, Elisha, is already acting as a prophet.

After *Jehoshaphat's* death there were the two *Jehorams*, each one reigning over their respective kingdom. It is interesting to note that king *Jehoram* of Judah was married to *Athaliah*, the daughter of the wicked king and queen of Israel, *Ahab* and *Jezebel*. *Jezebel* was of Phoenician rather than Israelite descent, and was completely caught up in Baal worship. King *Ahab* and queen *Jezebel* were also the parents of king *Jehoram* of Israel. Thus, the two *Jehorams* were brothers-in-law.

~ Elijah's Final Prophecy ~

The final prophecy of Elijah comes in the form of a letter to Jehoram king of Judah, rather than to the king of Israel. This is the first and only time that Elijah the prophet ever pronounced a prophecy exclusively toward Judah, all of his previous prophecies had been toward the kings of Israel.

King *Jehoram* did that which was evil in the sight of *YHVH*, including the killing of all his brothers and the other princes of Judah:

"Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab and done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. ...

"Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray." (II Chron. 21:5-6, 11)

It was at this point that God instructed Elijah to write king *Jehoram* of Judah a letter. This was several years after Elijah had taken his famous ride in the Chariot of Fire:

"And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying,

"Thus says the LORD God of your father David:

"Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways

Asa king of Judah,

but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants

of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry

of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your

brothers, those of your father's household, who were

better than yourself,

behold, the LORD will strike your people

with a serious affliction -- your children, your

wives, and all your possessions; and you

will become very sick with a disease of your intestines,

until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.'"" (II Chron. 21:12-15)

This letter from Elijah came to king *Jehoram* of Judah several years after the supposed 'death' of Elijah. It represented Elijah's last recorded prophetic utterance.

It is our contention that Elijah did not die at the time of his chariot ride, nor was he taken to a permanent home in heaven and given immortality. Rather, it seems clear to us that he was physically transported by God to another location, probably outside of Israel and Judah, where he was 'retired' from prophetic service. He had served well and had suffered greatly during his years of service, and it was time to let someone younger take on the responsibility. Based on all of the other Scriptures which speak of a physical death and resurrection, along with *Y'shua's* words that "no one has ascended into heaven," we conclude that Elijah's ride in the Chariot of Fire took place in the first heaven (the atmosphere).

~ What Happened to Enoch? ~

Now let us turn our attention to Enoch, the pre-flood man who was said to have been 'taken' by God:

"Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. ...

"Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

"So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." (Gen. 5:18, 21-24)

The book of Hebrews speaks of this event as well:

"By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had translated him;' for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb. 11:5)

The English word used here to describe Enoch being taken away is the word "translated." A more correct rendering of the Greek word, *metatithemi* (met-ah-tee-thay-mee, Strong's #3346) would be "taken away." For example, the same Greek word is used to describe the bodies of Jacob and Joseph being brought back from Egypt to be buried in the promised land:

"And they were carried (*metatithemi*) back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem."

(Acts 7:16)

So, to be "translated" merely means to be moved or carried to another place. In this case, Enoch was moved to another place so that he would not "see death." It does not say in either of these verses that Enoch "was taken to heaven."

The question must be asked: Why would God move Enoch away from the center of civilization? One possible answer could be that there were other men who desired to take Enoch's life. The reason for their hatred toward Enoch could well be because he "walked with God." The fact that the

Scriptures state this proposition twice is indicative of its importance.

A similar type of experience may have happened to Philip, the deacon who baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, when the Scripture says:

"Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:39)

Here the Greek word for "caught away" is *harpazo*, and it means: "*to seize, carry off by force; ... to snatch out or away.*" There is much disagreement in the world of Biblical interpretation as to exactly what happened to both Enoch and Philip, but in Philip's case, we know from the very next verse that he did not leave the earth:

"But Philip was found at Azotus." (Acts 8:40a)

It is worthwhile to note that within the traditions of Judaism, two views prevail concerning Enoch. The most common tradition, and the one accepted by Rabbinic Judaism, is similar to the common Christian understanding. In this view, Enoch is taken to heaven where he was given the names of *Metatron* and *Safra Rabba*, or 'Great Scribe.'

The second view is somewhat different. Here we find that Enoch is said to have actually suffered death in his three hundred and sixty-fifth year. This viewpoint is delineated in the following quote from *The Jewish Encyclopedia*:

"Enoch is held to have been inconsistent in his piety and therefore to have been removed by God before his time in order to forestall further lapses. The miraculous character of his translation is denied, his death being attributed to the plague." (Vol. 5, p. 178.)

Given the multitude of Scriptures that indicate men do not go to dwell in heaven for all eternity upon their death, and given the clear words of *Y'shua* that:

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven." (John 3:13)

It is therefore our conclusion that Enoch was moved away from the center of civilization so that he would not be killed by men who hated him because of his close relationship with God. It is also our view that he did not die at that time, else the Scriptures would state that fact, as it does with the other pre-flood men of renown.

~ A Parable ~

Now let us turn our attention to the parable of *Lazarus and the Rich Man*:

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died

and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"Then 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 in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us."

"Then he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment."

"Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

"And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

"But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.""" (Luke 16:19-31)

There were two primary methods of teaching used by the first century rabbis. One is called *Aggadah* (Ah-gah-dah), or the story method of teaching; the other was called *Halacha* (Hah-lah-cah = "the way one walks"), which was the teaching of *Torah* principles or 'law.' *Y'shua's* primary method of teaching was through the use of *Aggadah*, or story telling, and His parables give witness to this fact.

The first thing to recognize about any parable is that it is a parable, not a literal truth. This was certainly true in the first century when Jewish teachers used a story method called *Midrash*, in which the story itself did not have to be true literally, but the moral that it taught did. Although *Y'shua* did sometimes teach *Halacha*, His primary method of instruction was *Aggadic*, employing parables or *Midrash*.

The following interpretive passage teaches us that the parables of *Y'shua* are in the form of classic Jewish *Midrash*, and are not to be taken literally:

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

"But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?"

"He said to them, "An enemy has done this."

"The servants said to him, "Do you want us then to go and gather them up?"

"But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"" (Matt. 13:24-30)

A literal reading of this parable might have lead some to conclude that, just prior to the return of *Y'shua* to this earth, all Believers would turn into either wheat plants or weeds. However, the accompanying interpretation makes its meaning clear:

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.'

"He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"" (Matt. 13:36-43)

The moral truths of the *Midrash* known as the *Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man* are all supported by other Scriptures as follows:

- ◆ Men will be rewarded according to their works.
- ◆ How one treats other people reveals one's relationship with God, and therefore may be a predictor of the condition of their salvation.
- ◆ At some point in the future an impassable 'great gulf' will be fixed between those who are to receive eternal life and those who are to receive eternal death.
- ◆ The instructions which teach us how to live a righteous life are found in the books of Moses (the *Torah*) and the Prophets.
- ◆ The ultimate fate of the wicked is death in the Lake of Fire.
- ◆ The ultimate fate of the righteous is eternal life with the likes of Abraham.

The *Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man* is not intended to be a factual, literal account of life in heaven. To view this parable in a literal sense is to do injustice to the intentions of *Y'shua's* method of teaching. When *Y'shua* wanted to communicate a factual truth, He used the *Halachic* method and spoke in a direct, factual manner. For example:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not commit adultery," but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."" (Matt. 5:27-28)

This is a clear *Halachic* example of *Y'shua* teaching His disciples a stricter interpretation of the law than what was given in the *Torah*.

Y'shua's use of parables and *Midrash* were for the purpose of teaching how one should conduct his/her life in preparation for the Kingdom of God.

~ In Conclusion ~

In our opinion, the Scriptural evidence for an unconscious death and a resurrection back to life, is incontrovertible. Both the Old and New Testaments teach this basic truth. Therefore, those passages which seem to contradict the direct statements of Scripture in this regard can only, in our opinion, be misunderstandings based upon long held incorrect beliefs, for the apostles lived their lives according to their hope in the resurrection.

Peter spoke of being begotten (born again) to a living hope of an inheritance that does not fade away:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."
(I Peter 1:3-4)

Paul also spoke of this same hope of a resurrection of the dead:

"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of *the just* and *the unjust*. *This being so*, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men."
(Acts 24:14-16)

So too, we should live our lives based on our:

HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

May your name be inscribed in the *Book of Life* for all eternity.

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