

Keys to Prophecy



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#13 - Fatal Deception

What really happens when you die?

Fatal Deception - What really happens when you die? And what does that tell us about ourselves - and about God?
Any study of prophecy and end-time events has to deal with the subject of death and resurrection

Last time we looked at the second coming of Christ

That one-time earth-shattering event that will be seen by everyone alive on earth at once - at the same time
Christ will return in person - in the sky - in the clouds - with power and great glory - in flaming fire
All the angels will accompany Him - It will be like lightning streaking across the sky
The sun, moon and stars will go out - A great earthquake will move every mountain and island
There will be great noise - the loud blast of a trumpet - the shout of the Archangel
The saved dead will be raised incorruptible - The saved living will be changed in a moment
All the saved will be caught up together to meet Jesus in the air - And forever be with Him
The lost will run for the rocks and mountains - and be destroyed by the glory of God's presence
This will be the end of the world as we know it - God's interruption of the cycle of sin and suffering

- 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (1137) *¹⁵For 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷Then 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.*

Some in Paul's day seemed to be teaching that the living would go to be with Jesus BEFORE the dead
Now most people today teach just the opposite - That the dead go to be with the Lord before the living

But the point of Paul's teaching here is that both living and dead meet the Lord in the air at the same time
The dead in Christ will rise from their graves - At the shout of archangel and the trumpet of God
They will join the living believers - And we will all rise to meet Jesus together - in the air
The dead won't precede the living - The living won't precede the dead
We all get to meet Jesus at the same time

In order to understand how this all fits together - We must take a look at the subject of death
More than 99.9% of all people alive today on planet earth will face death - We are all terminal

- TWO WHO NEVER DIED - So far in history - from the Bible perspective - Only Enoch and Elijah escaped death

- Genesis 5:23-24 (5) ²³*So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.*
²⁴*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Enoch lived before the flood - when everyone was living over 900 years -
 Enoch departed earth at the young age of 365 - But not through death
 As the old black preacher put it -
 Enoch walked so closely with God that - One day as they were walking along God said -
 “We are closer to my place than yours - Why don’t you come on over?”

ELIJAH - was walking along with his assistant, Elisha - when...

- 2 Kings 2:11 (350) *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.*

The only others who will escape death will be those who are “alive and remain” until Jesus comes
 As we saw in 1 Thessalonians 4:15

- There is also a select small group of SEVEN people who have been RAISED FROM THE DEAD
- Son of the Shunammite woman - Raised by Elisha - 2 Kings 4:8-37 (353)
 - Man buried in Elisha’s tomb - Came to life when his body touched Elisha’s bones - 2 Kings 13:20-21 (364)
 - Son of the Widow of Nain - Raised by Jesus - Luke 7:11-17 (999)
 - Jairus’ daughter - Raised by Jesus - Luke 8:40-56 (1002)
 - Lazarus - Raised by Jesus - John 11:1-44 (1038)
 - Tabitha - or Dorcas - Raised by Peter - Acts 9:36-43 (1062)
 - Eutychus - Raised by Paul - Acts 20:7-12

These seven experienced death and came back - But none left stories of where they went while dead
 And all these had to die again - like all the rest of us

- There are some OTHER RESURRECTIONS that have occurred
 First - An undisclosed number of “SAINTS” who were raised around Jesus’ death and resurrection
- Matthew 27:50-53 (966) ⁵⁰*And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.* ⁵¹*Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵²and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*

That story probably raises more questions than it answers - These saints who were asleep in the grave...
 They appear to have been raised by God as witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection
 It is possible they ascended with Jesus when “He led captivity captive” at His ascension - As firstfruits

- Ephesians 4:8 (1126) *Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”*
- It also appears that MOSES got an early resurrection
 We know that Moses DIED and God buried him in an unknown grave
- Deuteronomy 34:5-7 (202) ⁵*So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. ⁶And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. ⁷Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.*

But at some later time - There was a dispute between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses

- Jude 1:9 (1173) *Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”*

Finally - Moses shows up with Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration

- ☐ Luke 9:28-31 (1003) ²⁸Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. ³⁰And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

So it appears that Moses got an early resurrection - And was taken to heaven - Never to die again
He then showed up with Elijah - To encourage Jesus as He faced the ordeal of death on the cross

Of course the resurrection of Jesus is the pre-eminent resurrection
JESUS is the "FIRSTFRUITS OF THE RESURRECTION"

- ☐ 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 (1109) ²⁰But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

And Jesus' resurrection guarantees our resurrection - That God can and will raise the dead

- ☐ Revelation 1:17-18 (1175) ¹⁷And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Jesus holds the keys to death - He can lock and unlock the grave
When we know Jesus, we don't have to fear death - Because Jesus has conquered death

There are so many theories in our world about what death really is

Are the dead in - heaven - hell - purgatory - asleep in the grave awaiting resurrection - reincarnated - or just DEAD?
What does the Bible say happens at death? - Where do you go? - What do you know?

And why it is important to know?

This study ties back into our previous study of the 2nd coming of Christ

And will take two more studies to complete -

Next we will look at Hell - "The Good News about Hell"

Then we will pull it all together as we study the Millennium of Revelation 20

So - Let's go to the beginning of the Bible - and work our way through - on the subject of death
What is life? - What is death? - How are human beings effected by death?

The very first verse in Scripture dealing with death is found in...

- ☐ Turn to Genesis 2:15-17 (2) - The story of the Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

¹⁵Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but 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."

- ☐ Here we have GOD'S ORIGINAL TRUTH - Stated clearly

- ☐ That phrase - "you shall surely die" - is more literally - "DYING YOU WILL DIE"

The Hebrew uses the word for death twice - Now that is very important - as you will see in a moment

This is God's ORIGINAL TRUTH about death - Words straight from God himself

If we disobey God - the result will be a process called "dying" - as a result of which we will "die"

- ☐ Turn to Genesis 3:1-5 (2) - Eve wandered by the Devil's fruit stand one day

Where she engaged in a conversation with a beautiful serpent

v.1 *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

Don't miss the insinuation of doubt here - Doubt about God - about his instructions - about his character
 Has God really forbidden you to eat of the trees of the garden?
 Has God really put all this luscious fruit on all these beautiful trees - Hung it right in front of your face -
 Given you hunger and desire - and then said - "Don't touch"?

Eve was quick to come to God's defense

vs.2-3 *²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

And in response - the serpent tells the first lie

vs.4-5 *⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

- Here we have SATAN'S ORIGINAL LIE - about death - humanity - and God
- You will not surely die - Literally - The serpent took God's original phrase - "Dying you will die"
 And he added a NOT into it - "DYING YOU WILL NOT DIE"
 He does not say you won't die - But that dying won't end in death - Instead...
- "Your eyes will be opened - YOU WILL BECOME LIKE GOD..."

This is Satan's ORIGINAL LIE about death - Words straight from the Devil himself

If you disobey God - it will bring on a process called dying -

But the end result, that we call death - won't be an end of life

Instead - dying will be a transition to a higher form of life - elevating you to become more like God

This "dying" will not be a loss, but a gain - Not a down, but an up - Not a negative, but a positive

Not an end, but a beginning - Not a bad thing, but a good thing

He suggests that Eve is not really subject to death - just to a transition to a higher life form

And he says - "God knows" this is what will happen

Thus insinuating that is holding out on us - He does not us them to experience this positive transition

- That God wants to retain His God-position all to himself - and not share it with anyone else

The devil is still peeved that God would not share His throne with him -

Even though it was impossible - and would have resulted in the destruction of the universe

- That human beings are capable of becoming God or gods

Reflecting Satan's original words and desires - "I will be like the most high"

- That God has tried to prevent Eve from even knowing about this great possibility

This original lie has come down through the ages in every form of religious philosophy

So that the majority of people in the world believe that death is a transition to a more god-like state

That's why the majority of people would not take a walk in a dark grave yard at midnight

They are not certain that the dead are really dead - But may somehow still be around in some spooky form

We can always count on Satan having a counterfeit for God's truth - Which leads to great words against God

After all - He is the father of lies - John 8:44 (1035)

This is a vital subject to understand -

Why? - This is SATAN'S ORIGINAL DECEPTION - And still one of his greatest tools

Because it colors our thinking on so many other subjects

Judgment - Hebrews 9:27 (1153) - When does a person go to his reward?

Resurrection - If you go to your reward at death, then why...?

Second Coming - Jesus comes to raise the dead! Where are they?

Heaven and Hell - Who goes where? and when? and for how long?

Spiritism - Isaiah 8:19 (661) - Can we communicate with the dead? - As so many claim to?

How should we proceed with a careful study of this subject - or any Bible subject? - May I suggest some basic rules...

BIBLE STUDY GUIDELINES

- 1. Examine all relevant passages on a given topic before drawing conclusions.
- 2. Never base conclusions on one or two isolated or obscure passages alone
- 3. Let the Bible define its own terms - Attempting to reconstruct the thought and intent of the original writer
Being careful not to read our own ideas into a passage or Biblical terms
Recognizing we are working across major language, culture and time barriers
- 4. Draw conclusions based on "Clear" passages where the meaning is beyond reasonable doubt
 - a. Passages which speak directly to the subject, not obliquely
 - b. Looking at the weight of evidence - not the exceptions
- 5. Re-examine "difficult" passages or apparent contradictions in light of "clear" passages
- in light of conclusions drawn from clear passages and the weight of evidence.

What is the nature of LIFE? - After all - Death is intrinsically related to life - and life to death

The LIFE EQUATION

- Genesis 2:7 (2) *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 being.*
- Here we have the human equation
- "DUST OF THE GROUND"
- + "BREATH OF LIFE"
- = A "LIVING BEING"
- Or to use more common terms - Physical body + Breath of Life = Living Being
- Let's take each of these terms in order

- 1. DUST OF THE GROUND - The loose dirt of the ground -
Ground = Hebrew "*adamah*" -

Humans are made of "*adamah*" - which is why God called the first human Adam - The red-dirt species
The word "man" - used twice in this verse - is the Hebrew word "*adam*"

God hand made human beings - He did not speak us into existence - He formed us by hand
We can see God - kneeling on the ground - scooping up the soft dirt - forming each part - Sculpting

And what did God have when He was done - A mannequin - A finely crafted statute - A work of art
But still an inanimate object - lifeless - though life-like
 - 2. BREATH OF LIFE - Next God breathed into this still form the "breath of life" -
Breath = Hebrew "*nishmah*"
The Greek equivalent in the New Testament = "*pneuma*"

"*Nishmah*" is used 24 times in the Old Testament -
Let's look at a few examples to see what it means in context
By the way - With the good concordance - Like one you can select as an attendance gift
You will be able to do these kinds of word studies on your own!
- The next time "*nishmah*" is used in the Bible is in the story of the flood...

- Genesis 7:20-23 (6) ²⁰The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. ²¹And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. ²²All in whose nostrils was the **breath** of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. ²³So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air.

What life forms have this same “breath of life” in them - that was given to Adam?

Literally: Birds - Domestic animals - Wild animals - Swarming things on th earth

All animate life that lives on the dry land

So this “breath of life” is not unique to human beings - It is the same in all air-breathing creatures

Now there is one other important thing to gather from this verse

- The phrase - “breath of the spirit” comes from a compound word - “*NISHMAH-RUACH*”
Nishmah and *ruach* are Hebrew synonyms - used interchangeably throughout the Old Testament
Nishmah occurs in 24 verses - While *ruach* occurs in 348 verses in the Old Testament

Here are a couple more examples of the use of *nishmah*

- Joshua 11:11,14 (213) ¹¹And they struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left **breathing**. Then he burned Hazor with fire.

¹⁴And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none **breathing**.

Literally - They left not any of breath - *nishmah*

So this word deals with the breath that keeps us alive

When a baby is born - and the cord is cut - it takes its first breath - And it is fully alive on its own

When a person dies - They take their last breath and let it out - And they are no longer alive - but dead

Now let's look at a couple of verses where *nishmah* and *ruach* are used as synonyms

This is important - Because the rest of the Bible passages we will look at on this subject

will use “*ruach*” for the breath or spirit of a person

We want to establish that we are talking about the same thing

- Job 27:3-4 (498) ³As long as my **breath** (*nishmah*) is in me, and the **breath** (*ruach*) of God in my nostrils, ⁴My lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.

It is easy to see how the words are used poetically here in parallel - as meaning the same thing

But notice especially - which word identifies what God put in my nostrils? - *ruach*

Now look again at...

- Genesis 2:7 (2) *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath** (*nishmah*) of life; and man became a living being.*

So in Genesis 2:7 - God breathed the *nishmah* of life into man's nostrils

While in Job 27:3 - It is the *ruach* God put in my nostrils

So - Are we safe in concluding these words are interchangeable? Good - Then we can move on

Here is another verse with both *nishmah* and *ruach* - used as synonyms

- Job 33:4 (504) *The Spirit (*ruach*) of God has made me, and the breath (*nishmah*) of the Almighty gives me life.*

Why are we alive today? - Why are we breathing?

Science would tell you life is self-generating - We crawled out of the slime millions of years ago

That we are independent beings - Accidents that happened in an unfeeling universe

That we are alive because of nothing bigger than ourselves

What does the Bible say? - We are alive because God is giving us breath
 This breath is more than just air -
 We can pump air in and out of a corpse forever, and it will not come to life
 It will just inflate and deflate - like a balloon
 But the "breath" - the *nishmah-ruach* - that God breaths into us - is life
 But it is not our life - It is His life animating us - We live because He breathes in us

- Job 34:14-15 (505) ¹⁴*If He should set His heart on it,
 if He should gather to Himself His **Spirit** (*ruach*) and His **breath** (*nishmah*).*
¹⁵*All flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.*

Now notice the concept - If God takes his *nishmah-ruach* back - All flesh would perish - return to dust
 Many translations capitalize the word "Spirit" as if it is referring to the Holy Spirit
 That is very interpretive - There were no capital letters in the original Hebrew.
 I believe this is simply using these two words as synonyms.

So the Bible presents the concept that the breath is more than air - It is LIFE from God breathed into us
 Not just breathed in at the beginning of our life - So we run on our own until death
 Not like the energizer bunny with the battery that goes on and on - until it finally runs down
 But more like being plugged into the wall - Connected to the power source
 We live because God is connected with us and breathing life into us day by day - moment by moment

If this is true - Why are the wicked alive today? - Because God is giving them life moment by moment
 Even those who deny God exists - Who curse His name - Who live lives of evil and sin
 Everyone is alive because of God's grace - God loves all - even the sinners
 He does not want to lose a single one - So he gives life to those who even spurn him
 While continuing to call - appeal - show his love - try to gain their attention - win their love

This fits what we saw a few nights ago about the Gospel - That God has already saved everyone
 God laid everyone's sins on Jesus at the cross - They were all nailed there - Paid for - Forgiven
 God has already saved everyone - But He will not force everyone to be saved
 God SAVES all - Then gives all the choice whether or not to accept that salvation
 And God keeps us all alive while he appeals to us to chose life forever
 We do not get God to save us when we repent and ask for salvation
 God has already done that - WE are just accepting a reality He already put in place 2000 years ago

This verse also shows the reverse of the "Human life equation" from Genesis 2:7
 Remember: - Dust of the ground + breath of life = a living being
 Which we have seen is the equation for all dry-land life - animals - bird - humans
 Body + breath = living being
 God keeps all things alive by his constant care - breathing life in to us moment by moment
 Here - if God gathers back to himself his *nishmah-ruach* - All flesh perishes - returns to dust

- Ecclesiastes 3:19-20 (640) ¹⁹*For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them:
 as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one **breath** (*ruach*); man has no
 advantage over animals, for all is vanity. ²⁰*All go to one place: all are from the dust, and
 all return to dust.**

Animals and humans experience the same thing in death -
 No advantage or superiority of men over beasts - Same *ruach* - same spirit - same breath
 The breath of man and animal is the same - God's breath of life
 And - No one gets to see what will happen after he is gone

So we have seen that in the Bible the words *nishmah* and *ruach* refer to...
 The breath in our nostrils - the breath of life from God that keeps all animate creatures alive

This "breath" word has a wider meaning - Look at this example

- Proverbs 20:27 (624) *The **spirit** of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart.*

Here *nishma* is not speaking of the air going in and out of our nostrils

What is it referring to? - A person's inner thoughts - consciousness - ability to decide, know - personality

That part of a person which is able to connect personally with God

God can speak to your mind - heart - thoughts - and enlighten your inner being - the depths of your heart

Also - this "breath" word is used to refer to God's Holy Spirit

- Genesis 1:1-2 (1) *¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the **Spirit** (*ruach*) of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

God's Holy Spirit - is called the "ruach" of God

So these *nishmah-ruach* words used in three main ways

The breath of life that keeps us living day by day - More than air - Life from God

The spirit of a person - inner thinking - consciousness - mind - intelligence

The Spirit of God - His Holy Spirit

Now - There are several important verses which deal with the life equation - or its reverse

- Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 (646) *⁶Remember 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. ⁷Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the **spirit** will return to God who gave it.*

In verse 6 - what is being referred to in all that flowery language? - silver cords and golden bowls?

Death - euphemisms for death - a nice way to speak of an unpleasant topic

We use - passed away - bit the dust - bought the farm - kicked the bucket - pushing up daisies

So at death - the dust goes back to the earth - The body decays back into the ground

We are made from the elements of the earth - And we leach back into the ground over time

And the "spirit" - *ruach* - returns to God who gave it.

So here we have something going back to God at death - What is it? - the "spirit"

What is that "spirit" - We have already seen - it is the ongoing life-breath of God keeping us alive

And when it is withdrawn - we die - perish

Now this is a classic verse in people's thinking - How is this usually interpreted?

That the spirit is the disembodied conscious "you" that goes up to hang out with God when you die

Or if you were bad - goes to the unhappy place - of torment

That there is within you an immortal spirit which cannot die - which lives on after you die

Entering a more god-like spirit existence apart from the body - which goes back to dust

Here is the problem with that - THAT is not a Bible teaching -

The Bible knows nothing of any part of a human being being immortal - or conscious after death

Look more carefully at this verse - It says the dust-body "RETURNS" to the earth

Where did the body come from in the first place - From the earth - Earth elements

And it goes back to where it came from

How about this "spirit"-breath? - It "RETURNS" to God who gave it

What came from the earth goes back to the earth - And what came from God goes back to God

Something cannot RETURN to a place it has never been

So - if the “sprit” is a conscious immortal entity - Then what does this word “return” imply?
 If what goes back to God is the conscious “you” - ascending to a more god-like life form
 Then what came from God in the first place must be a conscious immortal entity
 A conscious you who descended from that higher god-like life form
 Otherwise it could not “return”

If you continue to “exist” after you die - then you also must have existed before you were born
 Because - Whatever came FROM God is what returns TO God
 Such a conclusion fits the reincarnation model of cyclical life
 which is far away from the intent and meaning of the Hebrew word
 and certainly does not fit the wider teaching of Scripture.
 Did you exist before you were born? - Does the Bible teach that? - I don't think so

- ☐ Ecclesiastes 9:5-6,10 (644) ⁵*For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.*
⁶*Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.*
- ¹⁰*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.*

What does this verse say about human consciousness after death? - There is none
 The dead know how much? - Nothing
 They do not receive any rewards - And they are soon forgotten
 They do not love or hate or envy - So they don't come back and spook the living out of spite
 They do not have any interaction in the realm of the living on earth
 There is no activity, knowledge or wisdom
 And where are they - IN THE GRAVE
 Right where Jesus says He will call them from in the resurrection - John 5:28-19 (1030)

We have the “life equation” again - in reverse - in...

- ☐ Psalm 104:29-30 (577) ²⁹*You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their **breath** (ruach), they die and return to their dust.*
³⁰*You send forth Your **Spirit** (ruach), they are created; And You renew the face of the earth.*

We actually have the equation twice - First in reverse - Starting with a living, breathing person
 If God hides his face - If God ceases to be attentive to our lives - We are in trouble
 If he removes our breath (ruach) - That breath of life that comes from him and keeps us alive
 We die - We cease to live - and our body returns to the dust
 But - If God sends back His “Spirit” (ruach) - we are created - just like in the beginning
 And thus God renews the face of the earth

Again - “Spirit” is capitalized in many versions - Interpreting this as God sending His Holy Spirit
 But look at this as simply the life equation - Talking about the resurrection
 God can bring us to life - God can bring us to death - And God can bring us back to life
 The God who put you together in the first place - can take you apart - And put you back together again
 Death may be permanent from our perspective - But not from God's - He holds the keys to death

- ☐ Psalm 146:3-4 (601) ³*Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.*
⁴*His **spirit** (ruach) departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish.*

What happens when the breath-ruach departs from the body -
 The body returns to the earth - “adamah”? - which is what God made it of in the beginning
 And what happens to the plans? - They perish
 What happens to the thinking process? - It ceases
 To put it bluntly - Dead people can't think!

So don't put your trust in human beings - Even ones with power and position
 They can be gone in an instant - and your future is gone with them
 Instead - Put your trust in the Lord - who lives forever - and is the one giving you daily life-breath

The dead are not only unconscious of anything happening on earth - They are unconscious of God

- ☐ Psalm 6:5 (516) *For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?*

The dead have no knowledge of God - And where are they? - In the grave
 Right where Jesus said He would call them from in the resurrection - John 5:28-29 (1030)

- ☐ Psalm 115:17 (585) *The dead do not praise the LORD, nor any who go down into silence.*

The dead are not praising the Lord - And my Bible says everyone in heaven is praising God
 The dead are in a state of silence

Which makes the following metaphor make sense

- ☐ Psalm 13:3 (519) *Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death...;*

Literally - "Lest I sleep the death"

One of the Bible's favorite terms for death is sleep - dreamless, silent, unconscious sleep
 No knowledge of the passage of time from when you head hits the pillow until you awaken

- ☐ Psalm 17:15 (521) *As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.*

Death is like sleep - And the resurrection is like waking up
 Remember last time - 1 Corinthians 15:51,52 - When the last trumpet sounds and the dead are raised
 We will be raised incorruptible - perfect - To see Jesus in the air

The NEW TESTAMENT word for breath-spirit-wind is "*pneuma*"
 It carries the same meanings as the Old Testament *nishmah-ruach*

A good example is...

- ☐ James 2:26 (1160) *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

Here James uses the "life equation" again - in reverse - Body - breath = death
 When the breath-wind-air-life force leaves the body - death comes
 You can live weeks without food - days without water - only minutes without "*pneuma*"

Here is a passage which uses "*pneuma*" in different ways in the same context

- ☐ John 3:5-8 (1027) *⁵Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit (*pneuma*), he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit (*pneuma*) is spirit (*pneuma*). ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind (*pneuma*) blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit (*pneuma*)."*

The word "*pneuma*" occurs five times in this passage - Used several different ways
 We have the "spirit" of God - which seems to refer to the Holy Spirit - and being born of that "spirit"
 And the "wind" (*pneuma*) blowing through the trees

This word is common in English -

pneumatic tools - those things they use at tire shops - to remove the lug nuts on your wheels
 pneumonia - the disease that effects your ability to get air into your lungs

“Pneuma” is also used to refer to the conscious processes of a living person - attitude - thoughts - intentions

- ☐ Matthew 5:3 (938) *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- ☐ Matthew 26:41 (964) *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 6:20 (1102) *For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Your outer body - physical - and your inner spirit - that ethereal inner consciousness - mind - heart
 God wants all of you - Outer and inner - But neither is ever alive without the other
 The outer body and the inner spirit-consciousness form an indivisible unit

“Pneuma” is also the word used for evil or demonic “spirits” - Matthew 8:16 (941)

But one thing is conspicuously missing - in the use of “*pneuma*” in the New Testament

The teaching that this spirit of a person is a living, thinking entity after death

That is a GREEK Platonic concept that had infiltrated into Judaism by the time of Christ

And then further infiltrated into the thinking of the church in the early centuries after the cross

Dualism - The idea that we are a physical body inhabited by an immortal, non-material spirit

A spirit which lives on after being separated from the body

This truth - about the nature of man - in life and death

is one of the major truths that was cast to the ground in the apostasy of the church
 when Greek pagan teaching infiltrated and distorted Biblical truth

We have now quite thoroughly studied through the concept of the Breath of Life

- ☐ Having discussed the BODY and the BREATH-SPIRIT - What about the “SOUL”
 Does not the Bible teach that we have an immortal soul?

If we go back to our original verse on the “life equation”...

- ☐ Genesis 2:7 (2) *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 being.*

- ☐ What is this “LIVING BEING”?

- ☐ The Hebrew word for “being” is “*NEPHEESH*” - The Old Testament word elsewhere translated as “soul”
 The Old King James Version of this verse reads - “and man became a living soul”
 The Greek equivalent is “*PSUCHE*” - From which we get words like psyche, psychedelic, psychology
 Things relating to the mind and personality

Let's look at how *nepheesh* and *psuche* are used in the Bible

Nepheesh refers to the WHOLE PERSON - The living person

- ☐ Genesis 12:5 (10) *Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.*

Nepheesh are simply living, breathing people moving from one place to another
 See also Genesis 46:15,18,22,25

Nepheesh also describes fish, birds and animals

- ☐ Genesis 1:21,24 (1) ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so.

Psuche - in the New Testament - Also refers to the WHOLE PERSON - Living people

- ☐ Acts 2:41 (1053) *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*
- ☐ Acts 27:37 (1083) *And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. (Also Acts 7:14)*

So a body that is breathing and alive is called a soul - "*nephesh*" (Hebrew) - or "*psuche*" (Greek)
 A body that is animated by the *nishmah-ruach-pneuma* from God - is a "*nephesh*" - A living being
 This applies to humans, animals, fish and birds - All ARE souls
 You do not HAVE a soul - You ARE a soul

Soul - "*nephesh*" and "*psuche*" - is also used to refer to the life in the person or animal

- ☐ Genesis 9:4-5 (7) ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵Surely for your life-blood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

Here "*nephesh*" is translated "life" and is identified with the blood. The life - soul - is in the blood.
 See also Deuteronomy 12:23

- ☐ Acts 27:22 (1083) *And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.*

Here "*psuche*" is translated "life" - No loss of life among those on the ship -
 But the ship will be lost - but all the passengers will survive and make it safely to shore

Nephesh is also used to refer to the inner feelings and desires of a living person

- ☐ Deuteronomy 12:21 (179) *...you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires.*

The word "heart" is *nephesh* - soul

Remember Samson and Delilah? - How Delilah pestered Samson to learn the secret of his strength?

- ☐ Judges 16:16 (245) *And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death...*

David writes of his longings for God - like someone wandering in the desert looking for water.

- ☐ Psalm 63:1 (549) ¹O God, You are my God; early will I seek You;
 My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

So *nephesh* and *psuche* refer to

- 1) a whole living person
- 2) the life within a person, and
- 3) inner feelings or consciousness - like longings, love and desire

But "soul" is never used with immortal - It is never a little person in you that flies away at death
 In fact - the Bible is clear - a "soul" can die

- ☐ Psalm 33:18-21 (531) ¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy,
¹⁹To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.
²⁰Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.
²¹For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name.

God watches over us - to deliver our “life” from death - To protect and provide for our life
 If God did not protect our life - We would soon die - Our “soul” would die

- ☐ Psalm 116:7-8 (585) ⁷Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
⁸For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

- ☐ Ezekiel 18:4,20 (817) ⁴Behold, 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.

²⁰The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.

That is pretty clear from the Hebrew “*nephesh*” - A *nephesh*-soul is subject to death - Can die
 The same is true of the Greek “*psuche*”

- ☐ Matthew 10:28 (944) *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).*

Gehenna was the name of the garbage dump outside Jerusalem - a place where stuff was burned up
 It became a symbol of destruction - More on that tomorrow night
 Notice - in this passage the SOUL and the BODY both end up in the same place

- ☐ James 5:19-20 (1161) ¹⁹Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰let 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.

Clearly - a “soul” can die - is subject to death

A whole set of ideas has been built around the concept of “soul” which are simply not in the Bible

- So the LIFE EQUATION is - Body of dirt (*adamah*) + breath of life (*nishmah-ruach*) = a living being-soul (*nephesh*)
 You don't have a soul - You are a soul - When your body is animated by the breath of God

So what happens to the SOUL when you die? -

What happens to the light when you turn off the electricity?

The bulb is like the body - The electricity is like the breath -

And the result of the two coming together is light - Which is like the soul

Where does the light go when you separate bulb from electricity? - It is simply GONE

What happens when you reconnect the bulb and electricity? - Light returns

When God breathed the breath of life into Adam's body - He became a living being - SOUL

When God pulls back his breath - The body goes to dust - And SOUL goes “out” - The “person” is dead

But at the resurrection - God will put Body and Breath back together - And the Soul will shine again

The Person will come back to life - To live forever

Remember - You don't have a soul - You ARE a soul.

- ☐ IMMORTAL - Let's take a moment to discuss the issue of immortality

The phrase “immortal soul” is used so commonly in religious terminology - that it is assumed to be Biblical

The word “immortal” is actually used very little in Scripture - and only in the New Testament

This may amaze you - But...

In over 1488 uses of the original Hebrew and Greek words for Spirit and Soul

Spirit - 722 - (*nishma* 24 + *ruach* 348 + *pneuma* 350)

Soul - 766 (*nephesh* 672 + *psuche* 94)

Not even *once* is are these words ever referred to as immortal or undying

If we have an immoral spirit or soul - Wouldn't you expect the Bible to refer to it at least once?

Just what does the Bible refer to as immortal? - Where is that word used? - Only in the New Testament

First - Let's look at the only Bible passage that uses the word "immortal" relating to human beings

- ☐ 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 (1110) ⁵¹*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵²in 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. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So 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."*

I want you to notice two pairs of words in this passage

1. "corruptible" - "incorruption" - these two words share the same root word - one has a negative prefix added
 "corruptible" - means perishable - spoilable - decayable - Able to perish or spoil - Subject to decay
 "incorruptible" - the same root word with a negative prefix - un-perishable - un-spoilable - un-decayable
 Not able to perish or spoil - Not subject to decay

Greek: *aphthartos* (G862) - Romans 1:12; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 15:52; 1 Peter 1:4,23; 3:4

Greek: *aphtharsia* (G861) - Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:42,50,53,54; Ephesians 6:24;

2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 2:7

From *phthartos* (5349) - from *phtheiro* - (5351)

2. "mortal" - "immortal" - these two words also share the same root word - one just has a negative prefix added
 "mortal" - is literally "die-able" - or "death-able" - Able to die - Subject to death
 "immortal" - the same root word with a negative prefix added - "un-die-able" - "un-death-able"
 Not able to die - Not subject to death

Mortal - Romans 6:12; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:53,54; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 5:4

Human beings are currently both corruptible and mortal - Subject to decay and subject to death

We are perishable - And we can die

We can spoil - I've met a few people who were "spoiled" long before they died!!!

We are emphatically stated to NOT be either imperishable or immortal

At Jesus 2nd coming - we will "put on" both "incorruption" and "immortality"

THEN - We will no longer be subject to decay or death

Just like Adam and Eve BEFORE they sinned - Which made them subject to decay and death

But there is a fine line here - We will "put on" these things - "enduo" - to invest, clothe

It still does not say that we are innately imperishable or innately immortal - But we will "wear" both

- ☐ Keep these two word-pairs in mind as we look at two verses that use the word "immortal" with reference to God
- ☐ 1 Timothy 1:17 (1140) *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- ☐ The word translated "immortal" here is really the "incorruptible" word - Imperishable
 God is not able to perish or spoil - not subject to decay - He is by nature incorruptible

☐ 1 Timothy 6:15-16 (1142) *...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*

☐ Here the “un-die-able” word is used relating to God - As an attribute of God alone
 God - is by nature self-existent - He is not subject to death - He can never die
 God ALONE is immortal - Which means what?
 Evidently everything and everyone else in the universe is mortal - Can die
 So angels are not innately immortal - Nor are humans
 That means Lucifer can die - And the Bible says he will - He will be turned into ashes

God’s creatures “wear” immortality - Our life will only and always be a gift derived from God
 The unfallen angels live in God’s gift of immortality - and will do so forever
 The fallen angels have rejected God’s gift of immortality - And will not live forever
 Human beings were created to live forever - To wear God’s immortality forever
 We forfeited that eternal life when Adam and Eve sinned - separated from God who is life
 We can be restored to that eternal life through Jesus Christ - reconnecting to God’s life

So our immortality and incorruptibility are based on our connection with God
 Just as our life-breath is continually supplied by God
 We never own it as an innate quality of our existence - We are never self-existent
 We are and always will be dependent on God for our continued life
 And connected to God - We will live as long as God does = forever - He is our immortality
 Our “victory” over death is always and forever a GIFT of life from God!
 It is not because we have an immortal spirit or soul - But because of God’s grace gift to us

God is naturally both immortal and incorruptible
 We are neither - Yet connected to God we will experience both!

There are two verses which actually use the word “immortal” in a way that relates to human beings

☐ 2 Timothy 1:10 (1143) - *“...Jesus Christ who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”*

☐ Romans 2:7 (1086) - [God will give] *“eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality”*

☐ In both of these verses the word translated as “immortality” is the “incorruptible” word

We are naturally neither immortal nor incorruptible
 But we will experience both through our eternal connection with God through Jesus Christ

☐ With this in mind - It is not surprising that Jesus favorite term for death was sleep

☐ Turn to Luke 8:41-55 (1005) - The story of the DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

vs.41-42 ⁴¹*And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus’ feet and begged Him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him.*

And Jesus was delayed by the crowd

vs.49-50 ⁴⁹*...someone came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, “Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.”*
⁵⁰*But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, “Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.”*

Notice - Jesus treats death as just another sickness to be healed - Death is no “trouble” for Jesus

vs.51-53 ⁵¹When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. ⁵²Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.” ⁵³And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead.

- The people there mourning knew the girl was dead - no breathing - She was gone
But Jesus said - NO - SHE IS NOT DEAD - BUT SLEEPING - Jesus calls death sleep

vs.54-55 ⁵⁴But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Little girl, arise.”
⁵⁵Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.

- Her “what” returned? - HER “SPIRIT” RETURNED - Her “*pneuma*” returned
What you decide about this story will be determined by what you already believe about death
If you believe we have an immortal spirit that remains conscious at death -
You will put that meaning into this story
If you see that the “spirit” is the breath that gives us consciousness - the LIFE from God in us
But not a conscious entity outside the body
Then the story fits perfectly with that Biblical understanding
Based on the united Biblical teaching on the spirit-breath - She simply started breathing again
God put His breath of life back into her - Just like he did to Adam - And she sat up alive!

For the other great story about Jesus and death...

- Turn to John 11:1-26 (1038) - The story of LAZARUS

vs.1-4 ¹Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha....
³Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”
⁴When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Jesus was a 1-2 day walk away from Bethany - So a messenger was sent to inform Jesus of Lazarus’ illness
And that messenger reminds Jesus of the special connection He has with Lazarus, Mary and Martha
Almost as if to suggest that Jesus really ought to pay attention to this request by these “insiders”
How would you interpret Jesus’ statement? - It seems clear - “He is not going to die” - Good news
I’m sure the messenger rushed back to Bethany with the great news - Jesus said Lazarus will not die!
But he sure felt like it - And then... he died

vs.5-6 ⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

Jesus deliberately did not go and heal Lazarus - but let him die - Is that any way to treat a close friend?
Then - After Lazarus was dead - Jesus decided to go to Bethany

vs.7-8 ⁷Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”
⁸The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”

Jesus had the disciples all confused
They had undoubtedly heard Jesus words to the messenger - “This sickness is not unto death”
They had seen Jesus heal someone “long-distance” before -
The centurion’s servant - Matthew 8:5-13 (839)
The Cyro-Phoenician woman’s daughter - Matthew 15:21-28 (848)
They probably concluded that Lazarus was not going to die - That Jesus had taken care of it
Now Jesus says - Let’s go to Judea
The disciples protest - Why go there? They are trying to kill you - That’s why we left. What’s changed?
Jesus answers them in a rather cryptic manner -

- vs.9-13 ⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."
¹¹These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."
¹²Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." ¹³However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

- ☐ Jesus says - LAZARUS IS ASLEEP - I want to go wake him up
 Again the disciples protest - The poor guy has been sick - and is sleeping
 That means the fever has broken - Why not let the poor guy sleep and get well
 The disciples try to instruct the great healer and author of life about the basic facts of life and healing
- vs.14-16 ¹⁴Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."
¹⁶Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him?"

- ☐ Jesus now breaks the news to them - LAZARUS IS DEAD - Nevertheless - Let's go!
 And Thomas gives his little negative retort - OK - Let's go die with him!

- vs.17-22 ¹⁷So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.
¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.
¹⁹And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.
²⁰Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.
²²But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

Can you hear the confusion in her words -

I know you could have kept him from dying - Why didn't you come?

Yet I know you well enough to believe you care about us in your heart - So why...?

- vs.23-24 ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."
²⁴Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Martha's understanding of death fits with what we have learned from the rest of scripture
 Lazarus is in the grave awaiting the resurrection at the last day - Then he will rise again

- vs.25-26 ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

These are interesting phrases

First - v.25 - The resurrection can happen right now if I choose - I am that resurrection

Indeed - as we saw earlier - Jesus will call all from the graves - Jesus has the keys to death

- ☐ "He who believes in me - **THOUGH HE MAY DIE - HE SHALL LIVE**"
 That fits - Live now and believe in Jesus - You will probably still die - But you will live again
 When Jesus calls you out of the grave at the resurrection

- ☐ But notice v.26 - "**Whoever who lives and believes in Me SHALL NEVER DIE**" -
 Doesn't that contradict the previous statement?
 In studying this - I discovered an interesting thing from the Greek language
 The word "never" has been translated by combining three Greek words
 And those three words are not even all next to each other in the original language

- The original uses two words for “no” or “not” - which together form an emphatic negative
ABSOLUTELY NOT - or in no way
 - Then comes the word for death - in the potential tense (subjunctive) - “MIGHT DIE”
 - Next comes the preposition “UNTO” (eis) - which the translators ignored
 - Finally comes the words for “THE FOREVER”
- So this literally says - He who lives and believes in me will in no way die unto the forever!

YES - That makes perfect sense - Though you die - You will not die unto forever
And Jesus makes it an emphatic promise -
There is absolutely no way possible that a believer who has died will remain dead for eternity
The Spanish translation is more accurate - “no morirá eternamente” - not will-die eternally
It does not say believers will not die like everyone else - and go into the grave
But that believers will not die eternally - Death for the believer will not be forever
Jesus will overcome death by the resurrection - And then believers will live forever!

For the Christ follower - Death is temporary - Jesus will call you out in the resurrection - To live forever
Which suggests that those who live and do not believe in Jesus - Will die forever
Which we will look at in our next study

Jesus finally made his way to the tomb - And asked them to roll away the stone
Martha protested - It had been four days - Decay had set in - You don't want to see him now!
Jesus prevailed - They removed the stone - Jesus prayed - Then called out - “Lazarus come forth”
And out he came - And he apparently had no stories to tell - He had been “asleep” in death
If he had been in heaven - I'm sure he would have talked about it
If he had been in hell - You know he would have told us about it

- SLEEP - was also PAUL's preferred term for death

- Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:12-23 (1109)

vs.12-19 *¹²Now 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? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵Yes, 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—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

Evidently someone in Corinth was spreading the idea that death was final - There was no resurrection
Paul says - That aborts the whole message of the gospel -
If Jesus did not rise from the dead - Then there is no such thing as a resurrection
As a result - Those who are asleep in Jesus are never coming back - They are dead forever

But Paul affirms...

vs.20-23 *²⁰But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.*

- IN CHRIST ALL SHALL BE MADE ALIVE - How many? - ALL
 - When? - Each in their own order
 - Who is first? - CHRIST - THE FIRSTFRUITS - The first picking of the full harvest yet to come
 - Then - AFTERWARD - THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST'S - When? - AT HIS COMING
- So when will those who sleep in Christ be made alive again? - At Christ's coming - Not now

And one other passage is of interest here...

☐ Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (1137) -

vs.13-14 *¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

Now this is one of those passages where you will read into it whatever you already believe about death
Paul speaks of those who have “fallen asleep” - who have died
Do we sorrow when people die? - Of course - But as Christians we sorrow with HOPE
We can have GOOD funerals - even though we also cry - We will see our loved ones again!

☐ Note v.14 - GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM THOSE WHO SLEEP IN JESUS
The Greek literally says - God will **lead** with Him those who sleep in Jesus
When you lead someone - You lead them FROM one place TO another place

Now - If you believe people are in a heaven in a spirit form - You will likely interpret this to mean...
☐ God leads these spirits FROM HEAVEN back TO EARTH
They come back with Jesus - So Jesus can put their spirits back into their bodies
At least I've heard it explained that way

☐ But if we recognize that people are unconscious - asleep in the grave - awaiting the resurrection
Then it makes perfect sense to interpret this to mean...
God resurrects from the grave those who sleep in Jesus
And he leads them FROM EARTH back TO HEAVEN with Him
Jesus comes - Resurrects the righteous - And leads them back home to heaven
Just like Jesus promised - To take them to the place He has prepared for them

And this fits perfectly the promise of Jesus in John 14:3 -

☐ John 14:3 (1042) *“I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there you may be also”*

And the rest of the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4 makes this clear

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 *¹⁵For 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷Then 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. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

Some in Paul's day seemed to be teaching that the living would go to be with Jesus BEFORE the dead
Now most people teach just the opposite - That the dead go to be with the Lord before the living

But the point of Paul's teaching here is that both living and dead meet the Lord at the same time
The dead in Christ will rise from their graves - At the shout of archangel and the trumpet of God
They will join the living believers - And we will all rise to meet Jesus together - in the air
The dead won't precede the living - The living won't precede the dead
We all get to meet Jesus at the same time

What a picture - What a view of death - A moment of dreamless sleep
Whether you are Adam who has been in the grave for some 5000 or more years
Or someone who dies the day before Jesus comes
Your time in the grave will be the same length - just a moment - the blink of an eye
God utilizes the sleep of death - to let you bypass all the intervening years of pain and trouble
And go immediately - from your perspective - to the finish line - the 2nd coming

The dead are not in heaven - looking down and watching us - Enduring the pain of sin from a distance
 Seeing their loved ones suffer - for generations - That would not be happiness or heaven
 The dead are safely tucked into God's safe deposit box of death - Out of reach of the devil and his schemes
 Their eternity if fixed with God - And He will call them from the grave when He comes again

You see - YOU DON'T GO STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN OR HELL AT DEATH
 From the perspective of the one who dies - YOU GO STRAIGHT TO THE RESURRECTION

Now let's go back to one more Old Testament passage - and look at it by way of a summary

- Turn to Job 14:1 (488)
 vs.1-2 ¹"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.
- ²He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and DOES NOT CONTINUE.

Life is short and difficult - and then you die - Not too appealing sometimes

- vs.7-9 ⁷"For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, a
 And that its tender shoots will not cease.
⁸Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground,
⁹Yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.

Have you cut down a tree or shrub - only to have it grow again out of the stump? - It happens all the time

- vs.10-12 ¹⁰But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he?
¹¹As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dries up,
 ¹²So man lies down and DOES NOT RISE.
 TILL THE HEAVENS ARE NO MORE, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep.

The sleep of death will not be broken - until the end - When the heavens roll back and Jesus comes in the sky

- vs.13-14 ¹³"Oh, that You would HIDE ME IN THE GRAVE,
 that You would conceal me UNTIL YOUR WRATH IS PAST,
 That You would APPOINT ME A SET TIME, AND REMEMBER ME!
 ¹⁴If a man dies, shall he live again?
 All the days of my hard service I WILL WAIT, TILL MY CHANGE COMES.

We rest in the grave - until the appointed time - We get to bypass all the trouble in the meantime
 But God has set a time for Jesus return - and the resurrection - And he will remember each one of us
 And when we rise - we will be changed - in an instant - and go all together to be with Jesus forever

Now you are bound to have a few unanswered questions

What about the Thief on the Cross

Didn't Jesus promise that he would be with him that day in Paradise - It's right there in...

- Luke 23:42-43 (1023) ⁴²Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."
⁴³And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Now this is an interesting one - But very easy to solve

What you already believe the Bible teaches will determine what you see in this verse

- The key phrase we must deal with is - "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."
 Where it sure sounds like Jesus promises the thief that he will be with him in Paradise that very day

The original Greek was written in all capital letters with no punctuation or word division

- And looks like this - ΑΜΗΝΛΕΓΩΣΟΙΣΗΜΕΡΟΝΜΕΤΕΜΟΥΕΣΗΕΝΤΩΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ

A translator - working with the ancient manuscripts first has to separate out the words

☐ AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ

Now let's make what is called an "interlinear" translation - Where we put an exact translation under each word
And we will do that in both English and Spanish

☐ AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ
Amen I-say to-you today with me you-will-be in the Paradise
Amen digo te hoy con-----migo estarán en la paraíso

Adding punctuation to the translation is up to the translator based on the rules of the language
And virtually all translators put a COMMA BEFORE the word "TODAY"

☐ AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ
Amen I-say to-you, today with me you-will-be in the Paradise
Amen digo te, hoy con-----migo estarán en la paraíso

Punctuated that way, Jesus is telling the thief that this very day they will be together up in Paradise
But this is an instance where the COMMA could fit just as well linguistically AFTER the word "TODAY"
And moving the comma drastically changes the meaning of the sentence

☐ AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ
Amen I-say to-you today, with me you-will-be in the Paradise
Amen digo te hoy, con-----migo estarán en la paraíso

Punctuated that way - Jesus is simply giving the thief the immediate assurance of eternal life
Something which He offers to everyone - You can know today that you will be in Paradise
That is simply the promise that you in Jesus you have eternal life
And now the sentence fits with the rest of the teaching of scripture on the subject of death and resurrection
The thief is assured that he can die with the absolute hope of rising in the resurrection to live forever

One other thing - I discovered something in Spanish translations that I have never seen in the English
Most of the Spanish translations I have seen add a relative pronoun "que" ("that") before the word "today"
Some translations put in a comma - and others don't use a comma at all
The translation looks like this...

☐ AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ
Amen I-say to-you, [that] today with me you-will-be in the Paradise
Amen digo te, [que] hoy con-----migo estarán en la paraíso

It is not unusual or inappropriate for translators to add words which help the translated sentence flow
so long as those words do not change the original meaning
The Greek language has relative pronouns in its grammar - But there is no relative pronoun in this sentence
So it is purely an addition made by the translators

This makes the translation say, "Amen, I-say to-you, that today with-me you-will-be in the Paradise."

Again, the translators have added the word in a way that reflects what they already believe about death

☐ But if we move the added RELATIVE PRONOUN, along with the comma, to AFTER the word "TODAY"

AMHN ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣ
Amen I-say to-you today, [that] with me you-will-be in the Paradise
Amen digo te hoy, [que] con-----migo estarán en la paraíso

We get the same corrected result - "Amen, I-say to-you today, that with me you-will-be in the Paradise"
Jesus offers the thief the immediate assurance of salvation
And this verse now fits with what the rest of Scripture teaches about death

So this is simply a case where the translation can go either way - Depending on what you believe about death
 So this verse is ambiguous - And should not be used to determine the truth about death
 Rather - what you believe is the truth about death will determine how this verse is understood and translated

Our alternate punctuation has further Biblical support

In reality - it is most likely that the thief did not even die that day -
 It usually took several days to die of crucifixion

- ☐ John 19:31-33 (1048) ³¹Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³²Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

Jesus died in about 6 hours - He died of the crushing weight of my sin - Not of crucifixion
 But as sundown neared - the Pharisees didn't want the bodies on the cross over Sabbath
 So they had the soldiers come and break their legs - and take them away
 But they did not break Jesus legs - Because He was already dead

But even clearer are Jesus words on resurrection morning to Mary...

- ☐ John 20:17 (1049) *Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"*

Jesus made it clear - He did not go to Paradise on Friday - He still hadn't gone there on Sunday morning

So the comma - in all Bible translations - is placed where it is because of what the translators believe
 Since virtually all Christians believe you have an immortal soul that goes directly to heaven or hell at death
 Virtually every Bible translation shows that bias in where the translators put the comma
 But punctuation is not inspired - Punctuation does not even exist in the original -
 Therefore any and all punctuation in your Bible is there by interpretation - not by inspiration
 And remember - every translation involves interpretation - There is no such thing as exact translation

In this case - According to the Greek and English and Spanish -

- The Comma and/or relative pronoun could be on either side of the word "Today"

If you believe a person goes directly to heaven at death - The comma will logically be put before "today"
 If you believe you sleep in the grave till the resurrection - The comma logically goes after "today"

I believe - Jesus promised the thief that day - that he would be with him in Paradise

Jesus gave him the assurance of salvation - Which we each can have

Not based on going to heaven at death - But on the guarantee of the resurrection at the 2nd coming
 And sleeping out the interim in an instant

Another verse comes to mind - What about this verse...?

- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (1137) *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Again - We read into this verse whatever we already believe about the spirit, soul and body

It says nothing about what the spirit, soul or body are

About being immortal - Or existing outside the body or after the destruction of the body

It says nothing about one part existing independent of the other

These are words which attempt to describes various aspects of the human existence

We are more than a body - Our being includes: Thinking - Conscience - Personality

There is an immaterial part to us - But **immaterial does not mean immortal**
 or that the immaterial can exist apart from the material

Furthermore - Look closely - May God “preserve” your spirit, soul and body - AT the coming of our Lord Jesus
 This speaks of the hope of the resurrection - When the WHOLE YOU is preserved through the resurrection
 All of you - Not just part of you - will come up to live with Jesus forever

When Jesus rose from the grave - He was a whole, real, physical person - Not a ghost

- Luke 24:36-43 (1024) ³⁶Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.” ³⁷But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. ³⁸And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” ⁴⁰When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” ⁴²So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³And He took it and ate in their presence.

Jesus was not an immaterial being - He had real hands and feet - flesh and bones - He could be touched
 And He ate real food

Paul tells us clearly that when we are raised from the grave - our bodies will be like Jesus resurrected body
 See 1 Corinthians 15:35-49 (1110)

Now there are two other passages which need to be dealt with

Didn't Paul say somewhere that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord”?
 And what about the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus?

- We will cover both of those tomorrow night in our topic - “The Good News about Hell”

- So - WHERE DO **WE** GO WHEN WE DIE? - In terms of our conscious existence in the stream of time?

- At death - WE go STRAIGHT TO THE RESURRECTION!

- And what happens to the intervening time - Be it 5 minutes or 5000 years? - It CEASES TO EXIST!
 We leapfrog the intervening time - in the blink of an eye
 The next moment after you die - You will wake up to meet Jesus - At His glorious Second Coming
 And we will all be there with you!

And this explanation fits perfectly with the testimony of the rest of Scripture

CONCLUSION

- A. Scripture teaches that death is like a deep, dreamless sleep. The dead person knows no passage of time or events from the moment of death until the resurrection. So, in his own perception, the person who dies in Christ awakes but a moment later - a moment which for him bypasses the remainder sin's misery and brings him to the sound of the trumpet when Christ's voice awakes the dead. AT DEATH WE GO STRAIGHT TO THE RESURRECTION!

Death is no problem for Jesus. Jesus holds the keys of death - Revelation 1:18 (1174). He IS the resurrection and the life. He can wake the dead as easily as you can wake another person from a nap. See Luke 7:11-16 (999); 8:41-56 (1002); John 11:1-44 (1038).

And He will call the dead from the graves when He comes again.

But during the time of sin - Death is God's wonderful way of manipulating time in our favor, lessening the time we must endure the presence of sin, and bringing about a great reunion at the second coming.

- B. This study is a perfect example of how to interpret Scripture. Certain texts about death are so clear that they cannot be misunderstood. When the texts which are more difficult to understand are studied in light of the clear ones the light dawns and the clouds fade away. We can come to a solid, consistent, and correct understanding of truth.
- C. One is never more than a moment away from death. Death could come at any time to any person. The coming of Christ is no further away for you than your death. At death your destiny is fixed, your probation closed. Have you settled your destiny with Christ, the holder of the keys? Is your eternity safely locked away in his hands? Will He call your name when the trumpet sounds? If not, then why not acknowledge your sin, right now, and accept the full and complete forgiveness Jesus provided for you 2000 years ago in his death and resurrection. Accept Jesus as your Savior. Begin a relationship with Him, and receive His instantaneous gift of eternal life. Full salvation is already in the bank for you, and the bank is only a prayer away. Claim your salvation today, so that when you die, you will go straight to the resurrection, the FIRST resurrection! 1 John 1:9 (1168); 5:11-13 (1171); Ephesians 2:8,9 (1125); Matthew 7:7-11 (940).