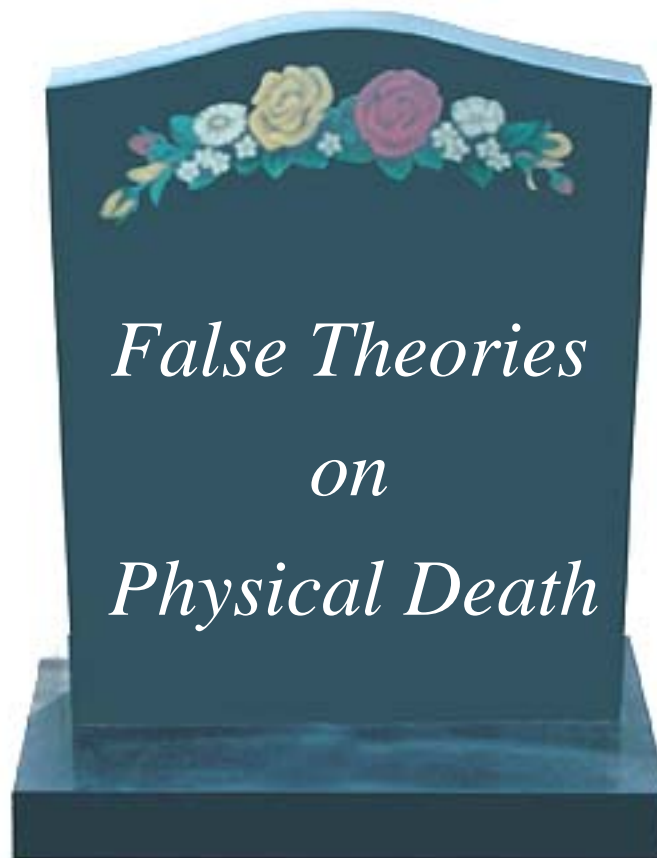


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.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV

False Theories on Physical Death

One subject most people, both Christian and non-Christian like to avoid is the subject of physical death. To most, death is a morbid subject that they would rather not venture into. However, the current death rate stands as it has always, at 1 per person and everybody will make it unless the Lord returns to rapture his church first. If the Lord returns first we will be changed instead of dying, “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Then, like Enoch and Elijah, the two men in the Bible that never saw death, the saints still alive at the Lord’s return won’t see death. (Genesis 5:24; Enoch, 2 Kings 2:11; Elijah) Because physical death is not a popular subject, most Christians never bother to become equipped with an explanation of physical death to those that ask for an explanation. With that said, I’d like to visit two of the most common erroneous views on what happens when physical death occurs in light of what the Bible teaches on the subject. The two views to be examined in this work are as follows:

1. Reincarnation
2. Annihilation

1. Reincarnation - Reincarnationists believe that at physical death, the soul, which is eternal, passes from one physical body to another. In addition, they say the cycle of death and rebirth continues until each person achieves a state of utter perfection through good works. For some, this includes becoming “one with the universe.” Some even suggest the Bible teaches reincarnation. As proof, they quote passages like John 3:7, “you must be born again.” They also use John 9:2, “his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” (Both passages to be discussed later)

Problems with reincarnation when compared to biblical teaching:

- A. Reincarnationists teach a works based righteousness while the Bible teaches salvation apart from any works. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the **gift** of God – **Not by works**, so that no one can boast.” Titus 3:5 (NIV) says, “He saved us, **not because of righteous things we have done**, but because of his mercy...”
- B. By suggesting the cycle of death and rebirth continues until perfection is achieved, reincarnationists deny the reality of eternal torment for those that reject God’s gift of salvation before they die. According to the Bible, we have one life with many opportunities, at any age or time during our lives to accept or reject God’s gift of salvation, after that, we die and are judged, no second chances. Hebrews 9:27 (NIV) says, “Just as a man is destined to die **once**, and after that to face judgment.”

C. Reincarnationists use biblical passages out of context to support their position.

- 1) John 3:7 (NIV) says, “You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’” A quick look at verse 5 reveals the context; it is a spiritual rebirth Jesus is talking about, not reincarnation.
- 2) John 9:2 (NIV) says, “His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’” This passage brings to light the Jewish belief that the infant could commit sin even in the mother’s womb. The idea that the man born blind committed sin in a previous life is not taught here. In fact, Jews believe in resurrection, not reincarnation. (See Job 19:25-27 and Daniel 12:2)

2. Annihilation – Annihilationists teach that those who repent and believe in Christ will go on into eternal life but those who reject God’s grace will not have eternal life but instead cease to exist either in death or after a time of punishment.

In support of their position, annihilationists reason that because God is loving, He could never punish a sinner for eternity for the sins committed during a relatively short life span.

Along with their reasoning, annihilationists make the following three arguments to support their position:

- 1) They say the Bible teaches sinners will be destroyed not punished forever. They use 2 Thessalonians 1:9 (HCSB) “These will pay the penalty of everlasting destruction, away from the Lord’s presence and from his glorious strength.”
- 2) They see fire as a symbol of complete destruction that consumes those that reject Christ. To the annihilationist, the words “destroyed” or “destruction” always means the person is consumed instead of being punished for eternity. Matthew 13:42 (HCSB) “They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- 3) They argue that the immortality of the soul is derived from Greek Philosophy, not the Bible.

Problems with annihilation when compared to biblical teaching:

- A. Regardless to the meaning, annihilationists pour into words like “destroyed” or “destruction”. The Bible is emphatically clear on the subject of eternal punishment. Revelation 14:10-11 (HCSB) says “He will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, which is mixed full strength in the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the lamb, and **the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever. There is**

no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or anyone who receives the mark of his name.”

- B. The fire and sulfur mentioned in Revelation 14:10-11 are not earthly flammable materials that will burn out, so that the torment will stop. Nor are those being punished consumed by the flames, their torment goes on forever as the text (Rev. 14:10-11) states.
- C. Jesus clearly teaches that man has a part of him (soul/spirit) that survives the death of the physical body. Luke 16:22-24 (HCSB) says “One day **the poor man died** and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s side. **The rich man also died** and was buried. **Being in torment in Hades**, he looked up and saw Abraham a long ways off, with Lazarus at his side. “Father Abraham!” he called out, “have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, **because I am in agony in this flame.**” (Note: Many say this is a parable and do not accept what is clearly taught. However, in Jesus’ parables He never uses personal names (Lazarus, Abraham and Moses). In addition, if we do call it a parable, it must still be truthful/accurate since Jesus could not teach what He knew to be false for any reason.)

Physical death as taught in the Bible can best be described as the separation of the spirit/soul from the body. Paul explains the physical death of the believer in 2 Corinthians 5:8 (NIV) “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (See also Philippians 1:21-23) When physical death occurs, the soul/spirit continues to live and never dies. Revelation 6:9-10 (NIV) says, “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the **souls of those who had been slain** because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. **They called out in a loud voice**, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (See also, Matthew 17:1-3, Moses and Elijah still alive and Luke 16:19-26) The Bible is clear; the soul/spirit of man survives the death of the body and is eternal. However, where the soul/spirit spends eternity is up to each individual. They can either reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and spend eternity in a place of conscience torment or accept him and spend eternity in the presence of God. What will you choose?

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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