

# What Happens After Death?

Lesson 1:

The Nature Of Man And The Certainty Of Death



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

# What Happens After Death Lesson

## 1: The Nature Of Man And The Certainty Of Death

Learn about the dual nature of mankind and the death that we will all experience

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### Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

**Study Number:** DGW75

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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## What Happens After Death?

### Lesson 1:

# The Nature Of Man And The Certainty Of Death

There are many questions that folks have about what happens at and after death – and there are many different opinions and teachings that exist on this subject. Some say that when you die, you forever cease to exist. Some say that you are reincarnated after you die (and come back in some other life form). Some say that you have a soul that continues to exist after death. I am sure that this only represents a small portion of the various teachings and opinions on this subject.

With all of these differences in opinions on the subject, how can we possibly arrive at the right conclusion? Can we ever really be certain about the things that are awaiting us at and after death? Or, must we simply wait until we experience death ourselves?

Think about it for a moment. Those who are dead cannot tell us about what they have experienced or what they are experiencing. Now, this is not to say that there are not people who have been pronounced “dead” for a very short time and then restored to life. Some of these individuals have even found a level of fame by trying to share their experiences. However, recent news headlines demonstrate that you cannot always trust these stories. For instance, Kevin and

Alex Malarkey wrote a book that was published by a major “Christian book” publisher (Tyndale House) called, “The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven.” This best-selling book, which began to be published in 2010, tells a story about Alex and his claimed death and experiences in Heaven. However, Alex surprised many whenever he set the record straight, saying “I did not die. I did not go to Heaven.” Instead, he admitted that he lied in order to get attention. [‘Boy Who Came Back From Heaven’ actually didn’t; books recalled. (n.d.). Retrieved April 28, 2015, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/style-blog/wp/2015/01/15/boy-who-came-back-from-heaven-going-back-to-publisher/>].

So, not only can those who have experienced death not tell us about what they have experienced or are experiencing; but, those who are living cannot tell us about what we can expect to experience – beyond their own basic observations. Yet, these basic observations about death can only provide some basic insight into the process involved in experiencing death. They cannot tell us anything about what (if anything) happens after death.

How, then, can we know the answer to the question, “What happens after death?” Only God knows the full answer to this question! But, fortunately for us, God has revealed some things to us throughout the pages of the Bible (which contains the words of God, 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Within the pages of the Bible, we have been given all of the answers about death and what happens after death that we need to know in order to help us live in a way that is approved of God. 2 Peter 1:3 indicates that God has given us all things we need to know that pertain to “life and godliness.” So, our focus should be upon what God’s word teaches us in response to the question, “What happens after death?”

There is certainly a great need to gain a proper understanding of what awaits us at and after death! If we are honest with ourselves and believe what the Bible teaches about this subject, we will desire to prepare our lives for death – recognizing that the ways in which we choose to live will have eternal implications for us! If, however, we choose to deny the teachings of Scripture on this subject, it

will not change the reality of the things we will discuss!

This series of lessons, then, is aimed at helping you to gain an accurate understanding of what happens after death – and how the answer ought to impact your life! The purpose of this first lesson is to help you reach two fundamental realizations that are necessary to this study: (1) We all have souls that will survive physical death and (2) We will all die.

## ***The Nature Of Man***

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A proper understanding of the things which happen at and after death begins with a proper understanding of our nature. How has God created us? If we have only been created as physical beings, then we cease to exist whenever our physical lives end. However, if we have been created with another element to our existence, then we will continue to experience *something* after we die physically.

### **Man is a dual-natured being**

Upon examination of the Scriptures, we learn of the fact that man is a dual-natured being. There is a physical element to man's existence. And, there is a spiritual element to man's existence.

This fact that man is a dual-natured being is a most significant fact that separates him from all other physical things. All other things with physical elements to their existence (i.e. plants and animals) are *only* physical in nature. They have no spiritual element to their existence. However, mankind has been created in this very special way. We'll consider the evidence for this claim and the implications of this claim momentarily.

### **Man's physical nature**

Genesis 2:7 describes how God created man: "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." Genesis 2:21-23 then describes how God made woman: "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up

the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.'"

Both of these passages demonstrate that God gave man and woman a physical element to their existence. Of course, this physical element to man's existence can easily be understood by basic observation.

### **Man's spiritual nature**

The Scriptures do not *just* teach that mankind has been created by God with a physical existence. Instead, the Scriptures teach that God also gave mankind a spiritual element to his existence. Notice what is recorded in the Genesis 1 account of the creation of man: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27).

Therefore, mankind has been created in the image of God! What image is that? What does this possibly help us to understand about the nature of man? Consider John 4:24 – and a statement Jesus makes about God's nature. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." "God is Spirit." He is not a physical being with a physical body (although Jesus did exist for a short time in human form). Therefore, whenever the Genesis record says that man has been made in the image of God, this cannot refer to a physical resemblance. Instead, it must refer to the fact that mankind has been created with a spiritual element to his existence!

In fact, as we will continue to see, the Scriptures plainly demonstrate the truth that mankind has been created with a spiritual element (a soul) that will survive physical death and will continue to exist beyond this physical life on earth. However, before moving on to consider some other passages that

further demonstrate this fact, look back at the Genesis 1 record of creation and observe that *only* mankind has been created with this spiritual element to his existence! You simply never read about God creating any of the other physical things (i.e. plants and animals) with a spiritual element to their existence. It was only mankind who was created in the image of God – and was given dominion over all of the other physical things on this earth!

Well, having established that mankind has been created with this spiritual element to his existence, let's now plainly understand that this spiritual element (soul) of man survives physical death. Consider the following passages as evidence.

**(1) Luke 20:37-38:** “But 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.”

In this text, Jesus points to the burning bush passage in Exodus 3 to answer the question identified in Luke 20:27-33. The Sadducees (a sect of Jews who denied the resurrection and the existence of the spirit, see also Acts 23:8) asked Jesus a question concerning the resurrection. Their question involved a complicated scenario concerning a series of seven brothers each taking the same woman as wife after a brother would die and bear no children. Then, they ask, “in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife.”

Jesus begins to answer their question by responding that the marriage is a physical relationship that only exists here on this earth. After the resurrection, there will be no more marriage or giving in marriage – nor is there any more death. Then, Jesus makes reference (in verses 37-38) to the burning bush passage to prove that the dead are raised. He said that there is evidence that the dead are raised in the statement the Lord made to Moses when He identified Himself as, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Now, Jesus said, God is not the God of the dead; but of the living! Therefore, whenever God claims to *be* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob years after these individuals have experienced physical death, this is

proof that these individuals (and everyone who has experienced physical death) still continue to exist!

**(2) Luke 16:22-23:** “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.”

This passage finds itself in the context of Jesus' teaching concerning two individuals – a rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus. Jesus' teaching begins by describing how these two individuals lived very different physical lives. One man had all the things he desired to have; while the other man was full of sores and desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. However, Jesus' statement in verses 22 and 23 concerning these two individuals indicate that both men experienced physical death.

However, please notice that both of these individuals continued to exist after the point of their physical deaths. The beggar (Lazarus) was “carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom” and the rich man found himself “in torments in Hades.” The text, then, goes on to record a conversation between the rich man and Abraham and details the great torment that the rich man was experiencing after his physical death. Therefore, this passage (which we'll study in greater detail in another lesson) demonstrates the basic fact that there is something we will experience after death; that our souls do in fact survive physical deaths. The physical element was not the only part of their existence!

**(3) Luke 23:43:** “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

This passage comes in the context of Jesus' crucifixion. At the time of His crucifixion, Jesus was being crucified between two thieves. During this time, one of the two thieves demonstrated a penitent heart, rebuking the other thief who was blaspheming Jesus. He said, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we have received the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:40-41). Then, this man continued and said

to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42).

Then, Jesus tells this man that he would be with Him in Paradise that day (verse 43). Now, from a physical perspective, all three of these men would die (as they were all hanging on their crosses, experiencing physical deaths). However, Jesus’ statement indicates that both the thief and Jesus would continue to exist beyond their physical deaths! There was more to their existence than just the physical existence. For Jesus and this penitent thief, their physical deaths marked the point at which they would go to Paradise (we’ll talk about this in greater detail in lesson 2).

**(4) James 2:26:** “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

In this text, James was writing concerning the necessity of works for salvation. He states that mentally accepting the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not sufficient for salvation. In fact, James says that faith without works is dead – multiple times in this passage (James 2:14-26). He even demonstrates this fact by saying the “demons believe – and tremble” (verse 19), implying that the demons will not be saved because of their mental acceptance of Jesus Christ. Instead, James says that “a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (verse 24).

While James is making these basic points relative to the necessity of works of obedience for salvation (not works of merit, as Paul talks about in Ephesians 2:8-9), he gives us some information relative to the survival of man’s soul past the point of physical death. Again, verse 26 says that faith without works is just as dead as the physical body is without the spirit! So, we can conclude that our bodies and spirits will one day be separated. When this happens, the physical body is identified by James as being “dead.” However, no such thing is said about the spirit whenever it leaves the physical body! In fact, others passages are helping us to see that the spirit (soul) of mankind survives this separation!

**(5) 2 Corinthians 5:1-8:** “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly

desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

Just prior to making these statements, Paul wrote concerning his great hope in that which is unseen and eternal (in 4:16-18). In that passage, he speaks of both the “outward man” and the “inward man.” The outward man was perishing due to the affliction he was experiencing and the natural aging process. However, his inward man was “being renewed day by day” as he was looking for the eternal things God has promised to reveal!

In this context, Paul makes some further observations to the Corinthians concerning his outward man and inward man (in 5:1-8). Paul plainly identifies a time when his physical existence (his “earthly house”) would be “destroyed.” He even references this physical existence as a “tent” (note that a tent is only a temporary structure). However, Paul does not begrudge the thought of this time when his physical existence would end. He does not say that physical death would be the end. Instead, he said that he groaned while in this “tent” – looking for the time when he could be further clothed with the heavenly body God has promised (see also 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)! Again, Paul is eagerly anticipating this time when he could be “absent from the body” and be “present with the Lord.” Clearly, Paul was looking forward to a continued spiritual existence after his physical death!

## **The importance of these truths**

Each one of these passages help us to understand that the physical element to our existence is not all that God has created us to have. Instead, these passages all demonstrate that mankind continues to exist *somewhere* after our lives on earth

come to an end. But, what should these important truths mean for us today?

**(1) They have implications for how we live our physical lives.** We should know that this life is not all there is! We should know that we will all continue to exist *somewhere* after our earthly lives end. This, then, should cause us to evaluate whether there is any connection between the way in which we live our lives and where our souls will continue to exist. If so, we should desire to live in the way that will result in the best possible outcome. Therefore, the truths we have just established have the potential to completely transform the ways in which we choose to live our earthly lives!

**(2) They have implications for what happens to us after we die.** The truths we have been establishing also have great implications for us to build upon as we seek the answer to the question, “What happens after death?” We can already know that we will not cease to exist at the point of physical death. Therefore, we can build upon this realization and continue our search for the truth about what God says *will* happen to us after we die.

Having established these basic points and this essential foundation, I want to encourage you to continue thinking about the question, “What happens after death?”

## ***The Certainty Of Death***

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Now that we have established the fact that man is a dual-natured being while he lives on this earth – possessing both physical and spiritual elements to his existence, let’s investigate some Bible truths about the subject of death itself.

### **All will die**

We are constantly reminded of the fact that death is in the world – and that no one is exempt from it! We can look around us and observe that things are dying. Plants die. Trees die. Animals die. And, not only are all of these things dying; but, people are dying all around us. Take a look in the obituary section of your local newspaper and take a moment

just to reflect on how many people who live in your community have died in the last couple of days! Our loved ones die. Our acquaintances die. Famous people die – from presidents to athletes to wealthy businessmen/women to actors and singers, etc.

In fact, when you really stop to think about it – we are all dying! We are all *right now* experiencing the aging process. And, as we age, we inch closer and closer to physical death. So, as we look around and observe the death that is going on all around us, we should be reminded of the fact that we are all dying!

We simply cannot escape the constant reminder that death is a common reality for all of mankind! But, the Bible tells us this is so. Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 says, “To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted.” Simply put: There is a time to die – for yourself and for everything and everyone around us.

Now, this is not necessarily a fact that we like to think about, but it is a reality. However, rather than attempting to live in denial of this fact, we are taught that we need to embrace its reality and that these reminders of physical death are actually very valuable for us – and better than being engaged in recreation! Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, “Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart.” It is “better” not because it is more enjoyable; but, because it is more profitable to us in providing us with the reminder of our own impending physical deaths and the need to make the necessary preparations for that time!

So, the Scriptures clearly demonstrate that there is a time to die we must all simply embrace and prepare for. Hebrews 9:27 says, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” We each have appointments with death. However, we simply do not know when our appointments are. Still, we can know for certain that we will experience physical death at some time in the future – and that there will be a Judgment after this.

Therefore, we will go “the way of all the earth.” Two prominent Bible characters recognized and embraced the fact that they were going the same

way of death as everyone who lives/has lived has gone/will go. In Joshua 23:14, Joshua said, “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth.” In 1 Kings 2:2, David told his son, Solomon, “I go the way of all the earth.”

We will each go the “way of all the earth.” None of us will be able to take a different way! We will all experience physical death – regardless of our culture, national, educational, political, or financial backgrounds! An illustration of this point can be seen from Luke 16:19-22. Remember, from our earlier discussion, that this passage describes the fact that both the rich man (who lived a life of ease and comfort) and Lazarus (a poor beggar whose body was full of sores) died. The different way they lived their lives did not change the fact that they would experience death. This is because death is the common fate of all mankind!

## **The duration of life**

As you recognize and consider the reality of death, it would also be profitable to know what God teaches concerning the lengths of our lives. And, as you have likely observed during your own life, understand that there is no guaranteed length for your life. Some die when they are well advanced in years. Some die when they are very young. Some die of natural causes that result from the aging process when they are old. Some die suddenly as the result of fatal accidents. Therefore, the only guarantee concerning the length of our lives is that there is no guarantee!

Concerning the length of our physical lives, the Psalmist wrote, “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). So, a realistic life expectancy has been 70 years. However, sometimes a realistic life expectancy is longer or shorter than this stated 70 years. Either way, this is no guarantee from God for at least 70 years of life on earth! Many never live that long. Others live many years beyond 70 – and even beyond 80 years. Still, you should notice that at the end of these years is physical death – as our earthly lives are cut off and we “fly away.”

No matter how long we will live on this earth, we can know that it will not be long! Consider what James writes in James 4:13-16: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

This passage helps us to see that we should be careful about making plans for the future – because our lives might not last long enough to fulfill those plans! Rather, we should be making plans with this understanding – making our plans in full recognition of the will of the Lord! Only if it is according to the will of the Lord will we live and do “this or that.” We must realize that our lives are not permanent fixtures upon this earth. Instead, as James describes, our lives are more accurately compared to a “vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” To understand this picture, boil a pot of water and watch the steam rise – and then vanish quickly from sight. That is your life on this earth! You are only here for a very short time! In fact, the man who lived the longest life (according to records we have) was Methuselah, who lived 969 years before he died (Genesis 5:27). And, though this amount of years seems like a very long time to us, it is still very short in comparison to eternity!

## **What is death?**

We are typically able to distinguish when someone is dead or alive. But, what really is death? There are actually two elements involved in physical death: (1) The separation of the soul and body, and (2) Vital functions of the body cease.

**(1) The separation of the soul and body.** While there are certainly physical elements to death (which we’ll consider in a few moments), the Bible also gives us even greater insight into the process of death. For instance, consider James 2:26 again: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Therefore, in addition to the physical things that happen at death, the Bible says that the spirit departs from the body.



Death, then, is a separation. Man experiences physical death whenever the physical part of his existence and the spiritual part of his existence separate. Man simply is not alive without the soul! This is further demonstrated in Luke 12:20. In the context of a parable about a rich man who put all of his focus and trust in physical things, Jesus said that God told him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” Thus, again you notice the connection between the soul of man and his physical life – and how that physical life ends whenever the soul is taken away.

Also consider the implications from Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 1:14. In verses 12-13, he speaks of the need to offer reminders to his Christian brothers as long as he was in his “tent” (his earthly body). Knowing, he says (in verse 14), “that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” Just as we saw in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, Peter describes his earthly body as a temporary dwelling for his soul. But, there would be a time when this “tent” would be put off and he would be clothed with a permanent spiritual body (see also 1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

**(2) Vital functions of the body cease.** From all of this, we can conclude that death occurs whenever the spiritual element of man’s existence (his soul) separates from the physical body! Then, whenever this occurs, we learn that the functions of our physical bodies cease and the body begins to decay. Psalm 146:4 says, “His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish.” We will focus on the spiritual existence of an individual after death in the next couple of lessons. In these lessons, we will try to gain an accurate understanding of what happens to the soul of man after physical death. For a brief moment, however, let’s focus on what happens to the physical body after physical death (that is, after the soul departs from the body).

When the soul departs from the body, we take our last breath. Consider the following passages.

- Genesis 25:8: “Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good

old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.”

- Genesis 25:17: “These were the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.”
- Genesis 35:29: “So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”
- Genesis 49:33: “And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.”
- Luke 23:46: “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, “into Your hands I commit My spirit.”’ Having said this, He breathed His last.”
- Acts 5:5: “Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.”
- Acts 5:10: “Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.”

So, at death, the normal and vital functions of our physical bodies cease. The functions of our brains stop. The functions of our hearts stop. The functions of our lungs to breathe stop. The movements of our bodies stop. Then, after these vital functions stop, our bodies begin to decay. Again, Psalm 146:4 demonstrated that our spirits depart and our bodies return to the earth. After Adam and Eve sinned, God told Adam, “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” (Genesis 3:19). Our physical bodies, therefore, go through a natural decaying process after death (i.e. after our souls depart from our bodies).

**(3) Death, then, is likened to “sleep.”** In Luke 8:52, after Jairus’ daughter had died, Jesus said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.” Of course, Jesus was about to perform a miracle and restore her to life – as Jesus took her by the hand and called her, saying, “Little girl, arise” (Luke 8:54), and her “spirit returned and she arose immediately” (Luke 8:55). Therefore, Jesus used the term “sleep” in reference to her death because of its temporary nature and her impending resurrection from the dead. The same thing can be observed regarding Lazarus in John 11:11 when Jesus said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”

However, the same terminology is used generally regarding death – because (as we will see in the coming lessons) there is an impending resurrection from the dead that will be experienced by all (John 5:28-29)! For instance, Acts 7:60 says that Stephen “fell asleep” as he was being stoned. Then, Acts 8:1 says that Saul was “consenting to his death.” Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 talks about those who have “fallen asleep” in Jesus Christ – and assures that they will take part in the Day of Jesus’ return.

Now, does the fact that death is likened to “sleep” mean that there is no conscious existence after death? Some folks use Ecclesiastes 9:4-5 to prove this is the case. The text says, “But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten.”

Do the dead know nothing at all – in the sense of having no consciousness? Consider verse 6: “Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun.” This verse helps us to understand that the discussion in verses 4-5 is relative to the things that take place “under the sun” (on this earth). Thus, the fate of those who are dead are sealed. They no longer have a part in that which takes place on the earth!

In addition, Luke 16:19-31 (which I referenced earlier in this lesson) is a passage that shows conscious existence after death (for both the

righteous and the wicked). Particularly, we are given greater detail concerning the rich man in torments. Though we will discuss the specifics of the passage in the next lesson. For now, simply notice how this passage discusses his conscious existence after death. The rich man could see (verse 23), speak (verse 24), feel pain (verse 25), and remember (verses 27-28). Clearly, Jesus teaches a conscious existence after death!

So, why is death likened to sleep? There are two things to consider. First, for the *righteous*, physical death brings rest. This can be seen with Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom in Luke 16:25. And, notice what is said concerning those who die in the Lord in Revelation 14:13. “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”

Second, death is likened to sleep because those who have died are awaiting the promised resurrection. In John 5:28-29, Jesus said, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” So, those who have died are in a temporary state – between earthly life and eternity (just like sleep is a temporary condition). We’ll talk more about the nature of this temporary state in our next lesson.

## **Why do we have to die?**

Before closing this lesson, let’s consider some fundamental questions that we all ask: Why do I have to die? Why do my loved ones have to die? Then, as we answer these questions, let’s make sure that we appeal to the Scriptures to find the answer – rather than becoming angry and blaming God for the presence of physical death in this world!

We are shown in the Scriptures that God did not create physical death whenever He created the world. In the beginning, when God had created man, He placed man in the Garden of Eden and gave mankind access to the tree of life (Genesis 2:8-9).

This tree would give man the ability to live forever (Genesis 3:22).

So, God made all of the necessary provisions for man to live forever by taking of the Tree of Life. However, death entered the world whenever man sinned against God. In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave man a law to follow. He commanded that he not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He warned, “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Whenever Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:1-6), they experienced spiritual death (separation from God) in that day. However, as God also pronounced physical punishments for their sin, He identified that man would die and his body would return to the dust of the earth (Genesis 3:19) and he would be separated from the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:22).

Thus, death entered the world at that time – and remains in the world today. Consider 1 Corinthians 15:21-22: “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” Physical death entered the world through Adam and continues to this day (and has claimed many as victims). However, there is victory over death that is promised through Jesus Christ. Later in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that death will be “swallowed up in victory” – the victory that is provided “through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). However, in order to experience this victory, 1 Corinthians 15:58 says that we must be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”!

Therefore, as we constantly interact with reminders about death, let it constantly remind us of the consequences of sin. Death is not God’s fault. It is man’s fault. In fact, all of the negative things we experience in this world is not the result of God being cruel. Instead, it is the consequence of the rebellion that took place in the Garden of Eden. However, because God is a loving God, He has given each one of us the opportunity to find salvation from the sins we commit through Jesus Christ and be given eternal life in Heaven – and be granted access to the Tree of Life in that place (see Revelation 22:1-5). We’ll talk more about what God has prepared for those who faithfully serve Him throughout their lives later in this study.

## ***Conclusion***

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We have certainly not exhausted everything that could be considered about our subject today. However, I hope that what has been said is beneficial to you. In addition, the points we have considered will serve as a good foundation for us to begin building over the next couple of lessons.

First, we have established that mankind is a dual-natured being who has a soul that survives physical death. Second, we have established that we will all experience death some day – and considered what it means to die physically and why physical death is something we must experience. In our next lesson, we will build on this foundation and discuss Hades (the temporary realm of the dead) and the return of Jesus Christ (and the things we are told will happen on that Day).

## ***Study Questions***

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How can you know what happens after death?

### **1. The Nature Of Man**

How is mankind different from all other physical creatures?

Does mankind have a physical aspect to his existence? Explain.

Does mankind have a spiritual aspect to his existence? Does the spiritual part of man survive physical death? List and explain passages to prove your answers.

What impact will these truths have on our lives?

## **2. The Certainty Of Death**

How do you know that everything/everyone will die?

How long will you live on earth? What does James 4:13-16 help you understand about the duration of life?

What is death? Explain the two elements involved in experiencing physical death.

\*What will happen to the physical body?

\*Why is death likened to “sleep”?

\*Is there conscious existence after death?

Why does death exist in the world today?

**\*Summarize what you have learned in this study.**