

# ***The Teachings of Jesus Death and Resurrection***

Lesson #12 for September 20, 2014

Scriptures: John 1:1-4; 5:28-29; 11:11,38-44; Luke 8:54-55; Matthew 5:22,29-30.

1. In this lesson we will discuss the contrast between God's statement recorded in Genesis 2:17 that sin leads to death and Satan's statement recorded in Genesis 3:1-5 that God has lied to us, saying that sin does not lead to death. Satan would like us to believe that the soul is inherently immortal. He does not want to believe that because of sin, one day, even he will cease to exist.
2. In order to fully understand the implications of these two opposite approaches, we must understand the difference between the sleep-death and the final-death which results from sin. Human beings were never supposed to die. It was only because humans believed Satan's lies and distrusted our heavenly Father that humans have experienced—and we still experience—any form of death.
3. Because sin separates us from God, we should all be dead; (Genesis 2:17; Isaiah 59:2) but, God has chosen to keep us alive—while living in sin—on a kind of life support so that we have an opportunity to learn the truth about Him, His government, and His character in opposition to Satan's lies.
4. During His ministry on this earth, Jesus repeatedly demonstrated that He had power over the sleep-death which has become so common on this earth. We know of three specific examples of resurrections from the sleep-death during His ministry: the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:35-43), and Lazarus (John 11).
5. God's description of the creation of man makes several things clear: "Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live." (Genesis 2:7, *GNB*)

Old Testament writers consistently held that a human is an indivisible living being. The various Hebrew terms usually translated as *flesh*, *soul*, and *spirit* are just alternative ways to describe, from different points of view, the human person as a whole. In harmony with this perspective, the Scriptures use different metaphors to describe death. Among them, sleep stands out as a fitting symbol to reflect the biblical understanding of the condition of the dead (see *Job 3:11-13, 14:12, Ps. 13:3, Jer. 51:39, Dan. 12:2*). Death is the total end of life. Death is a state of unconsciousness in which there are no thoughts, emotions, works, or relationships of any kind (*Eccles. 9:5, 6, 10; Ps. 115:17; 146:4*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, September 14, 2014.

6. In the days of Jesus, pagan ideas stemming from the philosophical teachings of Plato had convinced many people that the human body is nothing more than a cage which temporarily traps an immortal soul which comes from somewhere, lives in our bodies, and then escapes when we die to go either to heaven or to hell. That teaching has persisted in various forms and is still prevalent today including from the pulpit.
7. Read Luke 23:43, *NKJV*: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." It is important to note that there was no punctuation in the original Greek. One's understanding—in English—of what Jesus said to the thief is entirely dependent upon where one places the comma. (Remember that Jesus was actually speaking Aramaic.) Of course,

the idea that Jesus went directly to paradise on crucifixion Friday is contradicted by John 20:17 in which Jesus Himself said to Mary after His resurrection, "I have not yet gone back up to the Father." Furthermore, the legs of the two thieves were broken because they were not yet dead that day. Are we supposed to think that the believing thief departed and went to heaven even before he died on this earth? (John 19:32) That would be logical nonsense!

8. Again we read: "Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live." (Genesis 2:7, *GNB*) When God's life-giving power is removed from the human body, that person dies the sleep-death; and if nothing is done to prevent it, his body deteriorates once again into dust. (Psalm 104:29; Ecclesiastes 12:7) In other words, the difference between a living human being and a dead one is God's power. And Jesus has that power. That is why He could raise the dead. (John 14:6; 5:21)
9. When Jesus raised people from the dead, He simply returned the breath into their bodies; and as in the case of Jairus's daughter, He said, "Get up!" (Luke 8:54-55) In God's eyes those who have suffered the sleep-death are merely sleeping. The three people mentioned in the Bible as being resurrected by Jesus were not given eternal life. They were still subject to the sleep-death once again. However, the time is coming when everyone who has died in that sleep-death will be raised to life again. (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15) The righteous will be raised at the second coming, and the wicked will be raised at the third coming. (Daniel 12:2) Every human being who has ever lived will be subject to God's judgment. (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:1-11) As a result of that judgment, everyone will reap what he has chosen for himself. Those who have chosen to live a life separate from God will cease to exist; those who have chosen to associate themselves by faith with God will experience eternal life.
10. God's judgment is not an arbitrary command on God's part which punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. God simply reveals the truth about each person's choices during his life on earth. And the results are inevitable. Some are "dead in trespasses and sins"; (Ephesians 2:1, *NKJV*) others are "dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:11, *NKJV*) Every one of us will experience resurrection if we die the sleep-death. What happens to us after that is a result of the choices we make while in this life.
11. There is one story that Jesus told that seems to support the idea of eternal torment. It is the story of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in Luke 16:19-31. It was actually an ancient, but non-biblical, story probably coming from Egypt but popularly believed by many people. Jesus modified the story slightly but used it to demonstrate that our future destiny is determined by the decisions we make every day in this life; there will be no second probation. But, this story should never be taken as a description of actual reality. The fact that God is omnipresent disproves immediately the idea that no one can cross from heaven to hell! There are many other details of the story which are obviously incorrect according to biblical teachings.
12. Read Matthew 5:22,29-30; 23:33. The Gospel writers actually used the two Greek words *Hadēs* (equivalent to the Hebrew *she'ôl*) and *Gehenna* (a shortened Greek form of the Hebrew name *Gē Hinnom*, or Valley of Hinnom) 11 times in the Gospels. In that valley south of Jerusalem, the Old Testament Kings Ahaz and Manasseh (and possibly Solomon) set up temples to the god Molech and burned children as sacrifices. (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6) Sometime later, good King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10) stopped that practice and destroyed those places of worship. Jeremiah, who lived in Josiah's day, predicted that God would make the place a "valley of slaughter." (Jeremiah 7:32-33; 19:6) Later, it became the

garbage dump for Jerusalem. In order to eliminate much of the litter that was tossed there, it was kept more or less continuously burning. Thus, Jesus used the name of that place as a kind of example of total and complete destruction.

13. Read John 11:38-44. Just a short time before His own crucifixion and subsequent resurrection, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem to raise His friend, Lazarus, from the grave. Jesus knew that by performing this resurrection from the dead just outside of Jerusalem with many, many people present to observe it, He was sealing His own fate with the Jewish leaders. Remember that the Sadducees, including the high priest Caiaphas, believed that there is nothing beyond this life and, thus, it was impossible for any resurrection to happen. The Pharisees and Sadducees almost continuously disagreed and argued about this and many other things. The Pharisees had opposed Jesus almost from the beginning of His ministry while the Sadducees had not; but, the resurrection of Lazarus alarmed the Sadducees and led to the cooperation of the Sadducees with the Pharisees in their determined effort to eliminate Jesus.

14. Of course, by far the most important resurrection that Jesus performed was His own. Jesus said that He could lay down His life and take it up again. (John 10:17-18; 2:19)

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 785.2.

15. When Christ arose from the grave, He proved that He was not just a creature like the rest of us but rather the Creator. Thus, He demonstrated once and for all the very distinct difference between Lucifer/Satan—a mere creature—and Jesus the Son of God.

16. Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-20. Jesus proved that He has the power to raise us from the dead and to give us eternal life.

To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will: He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 786.4-787.0.

The voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: "Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!" Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. . . . From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 644.

17. Satan has used his teaching that the soul is immortal to wreak havoc on many people down through the generations. Notice these words from Ellen White.

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God

which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels.

The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abomination of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. Revelation 14:8; 17:2.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 536.2,3 (1888); *4SP* 356.2,3 (1884).

18. Clearly, the idea of eternal torment gave Satan the opportunity to misrepresent God in terrible ways. This is perhaps the most important reason why we should believe in the sleep-death and the biblical truth of the final elimination of the wicked. They will not live in eternal torment in some everlasting fire.
19. It is very important for Seventh-day Adventists to clearly understand these issues because one of our tasks at this point in history is to clearly explain the third angel's message. (Revelation 14:9-11) Can we do that?
20. The truth about the resurrection sets Christianity apart from all other world religions. Buddha, Abraham, Muhammad, and Confucius are still dead. Only Christianity has as its founding Father a God who has the power over life and death and will live forever as the King of the universe. Paul wrote:

If Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. (1 Corinthians 15:14-19, *New Living Translation*)
21. Down through the ages, especially in the first centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christians struggled with the idea that Jesus was fully God and also fully Man. Some (the theory of docetism believed by the Gnostics) have believed that He never really became a human being but rather that He just appeared to be a human being. Others (the adoptionism theory) have believed that He was a very good human being who was adopted into the family of God as a kind of lesser god. True Christians must reject all of those ideas. Jesus was truly human and truly divine. We cannot explain this fully, but it is true. We should not find it hard to believe that there are things which God knows and understands that we cannot!
22. The truth about death—both the sleep-death and the final-death—and what it says about our wonderful God should keep us rejoicing forever!

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