

III. Eternity in Biblical Perspective
If I Should Die Before I Wake...
“The Death of Death”
I Corinthians 15:50–58
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This is the third and final study titled “The Death of Death” in Christ. We have already seen in this study that death came from sin which was in Adam. When Adam sinned we all sinned because we are in Adam. Theologically before God there had only been two men in this world and that’s Adam and the second Adam, Christ. All of humanity is in Adam and in Christ we’re all of the elect of God. So what they did we did. This is what we call federalism which is the federal headship of Adam over all humanity and the federal headship of Christ over all of the elect and those who belong to Him. When we sinned it introduced death. Romans 6:23 says [23] ***For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Death is threefold. There is physical death which is separation of the soul from the body. There is spiritual death where we’re born separated from God instead of in communion with God because of our sin record, sin nature and that original sin (Adam). Thirdly, is eternal death which will be separation from God for all eternity in the lake of fire. Secondly, we learned how death spread to all men. According to Romans 5 it is because all have sinned. One we all sinned in Adam which is original sin and then with the sin nature we all have engaged in actual sin. So now let’s look at I Corinthians 15.

I Corinthians 15:20–22 says [20] *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* [21] *For as by a man came death (Adam), by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead (Jesus).* [22] *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

I realize it says here that in Adam we all die and I believe that but in Christ we’re all made alive which means universal salvation, doesn’t it? No, for you have two different Adams and two different alls. The all of Adam number one is humanity and the all of Adam number two is the elect of God that we see in the next verse.

I Corinthians 15:23– says [23] *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* Those who belong to Christ are those that the Father gives to Jesus – All that the Father gives Me I lose not one. None are lost because of the efficacy of the second Adam.

A book I would recommend on this is by a dear friend of mine named Michael Allen Rogers titled What Happens After I Die? And this goes into much greater detail than what I’m doing in these studies on death. The Bible tells us that death reigned, has dominion according to Romans 5 so what about the reigning of death.

I look out over a valley from my backyard and the clouds will have come in particularly on like a Spring day and they are coming through rather rapidly. Every once in a while on this cloudy day you will see a ray of sunshine coming right through the clouds. It looks so beautiful. This reign of death in its spreading to all men, every once in a while in the Old Testament there is not only a promise of salvation but there are rays of light. Enoch walked with God and was no more (Genesis 5:24). Elijah taken up to be with the Lord (II Kings 2:11). Psalm 23:4a says

[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

One of my favorite rays of light and life in the Old Testament is in the book of Job where God is giving us His covenantal promises of redemption in a Messiah through the covenant of grace as it's unfolding in the Scriptures from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses and on to David. There is this glorious picture given in Job 19. Job 19:25–27 says *[25] For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. [26] And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, [27] whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!*

Job is telling us that he has a Redeemer who is going to save him and even though he dies and his body returns to the dust, God will raise up this body and he will see Him in his glorified flesh. When mortality has put on immortality Job will see that. But perhaps the best rays of light at the promises of God that are given at the same time that death descends through the disobedience of Adam for then comes Another – this glorious promise from God. Let's look at Genesis 3. This study will be like a small group Bible study for we will go to a number of different passages.

Before Genesis 3 we know that man has sinned and the curse has fallen upon Adam, Eve and all of creation but let's look at what it says when the curse comes upon the serpent. The serpent is through which the demonization process is brought to fruition as Satan through the serpent came to tempt Adam and Eve into sin. Genesis 3:14–15 says *[14] The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and her offspring (seed); he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

This is telling us God has made a promise in the midst of the curse. His promise has two dynamics to it. Number one is that it is the anticipation that through the woman chosen will come a Seed which also means there will be a virgin birth because women don't have seed. It becomes abundantly clear in other passages of Scripture in the life of Mary but what will this Seed do? This Seed will go to war with Satan and with all of Satan's seed. This will be a death struggle. The Seed of the woman will be bruised upon His heel but Satan will be bruised upon his head which of course is the deathblow. The heel is not the deathblow but it will cost this Promised One. What will it cost? The Scriptures are clear for it will cost Him His life but He shall yet be raised in triumph which is anticipating the coming of Christ.

Now let's go forward to the New Testament where the fulfillment of this promise takes place through Mary as she gives birth to Immanuel – God having come in the flesh. Why did God come in the flesh? He came for this holy war – to bring war against Satan which will be a life and death struggle but will bring triumph. I know you are probably thinking you know why He came into this world for He was born to die on a cross for our sins, but I want to be a little more precise of what He came to do. Let's look at Matthew 1.

Here the angel is giving Joseph a message through a dream. Matthew 1:21 says *[21] "She (Mary) will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Jehoshua – Jehovah is salvation), for he will save his people from their sins."* He was born to go to the cross and to enter into this mortal combat with Satan and all of his servants, schemes, and snares for He was born for this holy war. Why? It is to save His people from their sins but that's not all so now let's look at Ephesians 5.

This is a definitive text on the marital relationship. Ephesians 5:25–27 says [25] *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church (His bride) to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* So Jesus died to purchase His church holy and triumphant.

Elders are told in Acts 20:28, [28] *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained (purchased) with his own blood.*

Now let's look at I John where we are instructed that Christ has come in the flesh and anyone that denies that He has come in the flesh is not from the Lord. I John 3:8 says [8] *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*** What are the works of the devil? Chaos, separation, sin, death.

So Jesus goes to the cross to do three things and they are intertwined. One is to save His people from their sins. Second, He went to the cross to purchase His church, not only individually to save them but to save His body, His bride, the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus says in Matthew 16:18, [18] *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Why? It is because He went to the cross and overcame the gates of hell. Then thirdly, at the cross He is destroying the works of the evil one.

What is one of the works of the evil one that he uses to hold people in bondage? It is the fear of death and then the judgement. Jesus goes to the cross to set us free from that. There are a number of places in the book of Hebrews we could look at but I want to look at Hebrews 2. Here is Christmas according to Jesus.

Hebrews 2:10 says [10] *For it was fitting that he (Jesus), for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.* The founder of our salvation is Jesus. How does God establish Him as our Savior? Let's look further in the text.

Hebrews 2:11–16 says [11] *For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, [12] saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." [13] And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." [14] Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. [16] For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.*

The offspring of Abraham are those who are saved by faith, even as Abraham. How does He do it? He sets us free from the fear of death. Now you can see those rays of light from the Old Testament. We don't die, we go through the shadow of death.

Now you can understand why there are all those euphemisms in the New Testament for death. When a believer dies Paul doesn't say they died as in the word *thanatos*, but he uses another Greek word which is translated sleep. He isn't teaching soul sleep but giving a euphemism to tell us the death of a believer is absolutely different than the death of an unbeliever. The fear has been eradicated because Christ has won the victory over it.

If you had gone to Paris Island and entered into the boot camp which used to be called basic training then you would have probably met a 6 foot 4 Neanderthal called a drill sergeant.

He would have told you something like ‘I’m your mother, your father and you are going to live to please me for the next 13 to 14 weeks so what are you ready to do, Marine?’ That Marine would probably say ‘I’m ready to die for my country.’ The drill sergeant would then say ‘I’m not going to make you ready to die for your country. I’m going to make you put our enemies to death for your country.’ Certainly, that Marine would be ready to die but that would not be his objective for it would be to put the enemy to death. The objective is to defeat the enemy.

That is true in warfare except for one war and that was the one that Jesus came to do. He died for you. He died for His church. He died to destroy the works of the evil one. He died to set you free from your sin, from its shame, its power and from its consequence, death. That’s why He would say even though they die yet shall they live (John 11:25). Jesus makes this promise to us in one form or fashion, six different times in the book of John.

How does He do that? It is because He wins the victory at the cross. Just like I was in Adam when he sinned, I am in the second Adam and when He wins the victory at the cross I win. The Bible says in II Timothy 2:11–12a, *[11] The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; [12a] if we endure, we will also reign with him.* And we will do this in all of His victory and all of His glory.

Jesus explains all of this in a parable in Luke 11:21–23 which says *[21] When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; [22] but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. [23] Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*

Here is this strong man who has all these weapons and armor to protect what he has. He is picturing Satan but then One stronger comes and that’s Jesus. He comes in and destroys not only his weapons but defeats him. Then He plunders out of his palace and that’s you. He plundered you from the dominion of sin and the fear of death through what He did on the cross to win the victory in His holy war – Christ victorious for us that we might have everlasting life in Him.

This was so hard for the Disciples. We see this in Matthew 16:13–23 when Jesus has this interaction with His Disciples and it says *[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” [14] And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” [15] He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” [16] Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” [17] And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” [20] Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.*

[21] From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. [22] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” [23] But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Peter pronounces a malediction on Jesus Himself in verse 22. Even His Disciples didn’t get it that He would enter into mortal combat and it was in His death that He brings the death of

death for us so that we have everlasting life. We with Job can say ‘this Savior who died and rose, my Redeemer lives and though I die I shall live for in my glorified flesh I shall yet see Him!’

Now the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Now when we go through the valley of the shadow of death nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38–39) because when Jesus died we died. When Jesus rose we rose. When Jesus ascended we ascended. Now we who are positioned with Him in glory, living here for Him as worshippers, soldiers, stewards, disciplers, engaged in the business of the Kingdom He will return. When He returns, all of His enemies – sin, death, hell, grave – He defeated at the cross will be destroyed in the lake of fire.

Then as John puts it in Revelation 21:1–4; [1] *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.* [2] *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* [3] *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”* [4] *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, **for the former things have passed away.**”* This is because of what He did on the cross through the death of death and affirmed in His resurrection so that we could everlasting life in Him.

If it is true that though I die yet I live then what happens when I lay down to sleep and I do not awake and my soul He takes? What happens when I die and go to the valley of the shadow of death? He will be with you and He is bringing you to Himself. What will that look like? That is an extraordinary question and I’ll go into more depth on that in the next study. It’s called the intermediate state.

I want you to get this headship thing. Do you remember the astronaut Neil Armstrong? He went to the moon and recently there was a movie that came out about him. Do you remember why he had to jump off the ladder when he came out of the spaceship to get to the moon? It was because the pods were too high. The reason for that was because they had figured after billions of years there would be X amount of moon dust that they would sink down into but it was only about four inches. We won’t go there right now but he jumps down and says ‘One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.’ By saying that he assumed that he took that step but when he took that step that all of mankind took that step with him. He represented us and that is somewhat by assumption, not presumption and it was a glorious thing for him to say.

Then Armstrong went a few feet away and placed an American flag there on the moon. What was he saying then? He had been commissioned to do that by the President of the United States, because when Neil Armstrong landed we landed with him. When he put that flag there that was us. That flag represented all of us and that is called federal headship.

When Adam sinned we sinned. When Christ died for our sins then we were redeemed because we were in Christ, having been given to Him by the Father and He saves us there at the cross. Therefore He has liberated us from the power of sin, the shame of sin, and the consequences of sin – the fear of death.

Romans 8:31–39 says [31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* [32] *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.* [34] *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for*

us [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this time for us to continue this study of understanding the doorway of eternity which because of sin is death but because of Christ, death holds no fear or bondage over us for our Savior through His death has put to death, not only sin's shame and guilt, but sin's consequence which is death. So we are in Christ who will be with us as we go through the shadow of death into life evermore. Now Father bless us as we anticipate looking at what that will be like in eternity in the coming study, but this week Father, I pray everyone reading this has died to sin and themselves to give themselves to Christ who died to set them free that they may live forever with Him. Father, help us walk in the triumph of the victorious Christ over sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.