

Man and Eternal Life

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Introduction

The corruption of the pure gospel message of Jesus Christ began while the apostles were still alive. Paul had to deal with Greek philosophers that denied the resurrection of the body because of the belief that flesh is evil while spirit is good. John fought against Gnosticism that taught an erroneous spiritualized view of Jesus Christ. If the apostles themselves had resist these kinds of errors, it shouldn't be surprising that false doctrines are even more prevalent about 2,000 years later.

Paul wrote to Timothy, **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [mythos 3454]”** (2Ti 4:3-4). And this is exactly the situation in mainstream Protestant churches today. The systems of theology being taught aren't sound doctrine, but simply fables or myths. It's a myth that man is an eternal non-physical being inside a physical body that continues to live disembodied after death.

Earlier Paul had written to Timothy, **“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will”** (2Ti 2:25-26). We typically think of repentance in regards to immoral living but it also applies to false beliefs. The devil ensnares us with false doctrines that we must repent before God. However, if we hear the truth but keep arguing against it and clinging to error, there can come a point where God no longer gives us repentance. We will then be taken captive by the devil at his will and left without hope.

I'm so thankful God allowed me to repent of the false doctrines I believed for over two decades and come to acknowledge the truth. I've had to endure much brokenness and repentance from false doctrine to get to where I'm at now, and my journey still continues. My prayer is that my fellow brethren would also come to repentance and “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.”

Roman Catholic false doctrine

In order to sell indulgences and pad the coffers, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) had to fabricate quite an elaborate system of myths consisting of people living as disembodied non-physical beings after death in a temporary place of punishment called purgatory. Obviously humans must continue living disembodied after death in order for this hoax to work and be profitable. Although life and death are both very simple and straightforward concepts—to be alive is to not be dead, to be dead is to not be alive—but in order for the RCC to sell indulgences, they had to teach that man is an eternal non-physical being that continues living outside the body after death in a non-physical abode. The Protestant Reformation successfully exposed and purged the false doctrine of purgatory yet most Protestant churches today continue believing and teaching that man is an eternal non-physical being that lives in either heaven or hell after death.

The teaching that humans are eternal non-physical beings causes a big inconsistency with the simple understanding of life and death because if everyone lives eternally then everyone has eternal life. When annihilation is denied, eternal life must be redefined. Therefore, in order for this RCC doctrine to work, both life and death had to be redefined because if the penalty for our sins is eternal suffering, then the lost still live eternally even though they don't have eternal life. This dilemma was overcome by redefining eternal life from that of quantity to quality—that it's not of length, extent, or measure, but of nature, condition, or kind. Now they can claim that everyone lives eternally but only the saved have a special quality of life that is called "eternal life." Thus the concepts of spiritual life and spiritual death were invented.

Rather than people dying and returning to the ground because of Adam's sin, "and so death passed upon all men" (Rom 5:12), it's taught that Adam passed down some kind of spiritual death upon all of his descendants so that everyone is born spiritually dead and will go to hell unless they're made spiritually alive. We're supposedly non-physical beings that are transformed from spiritually dead to spiritually alive the moment we come to Christ. Of course infant baptism then had to be invented to "save" babies from going to hell. We're all said to be born spiritually dead, although we're physically alive, then we become spiritually alive so that we'll go to heaven after we're physically dead. This is quite confusing but scholars and theologians are very clever at making it all sound so convincing! And death was also redefined to be a type of separation—physical death is the separation of the non-physical being from the physical body and spiritual or eternal death is the separation of the person from God.

It makes far more sense, however, that life is actually being alive while death is actually being dead. We're physical creatures that are either alive or dead. Eternal life is simply continuity or perpetuity of living without ever dying again while those without eternal life are annihilated—they cease to live and will never live again. But the current RCC and Protestant systems of "spiritualized" teachings shouldn't surprise us because false doctrine has always been a problem.

Man is a physical being

Man is strictly a physical being animated by the breath of God, "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** [*nepeš* 5315]" (Gen 2:7). The Hebrew word for "being" is *nepeš* used many times in the Old Testament for man: "All the **persons** [*nepeš* 5315] who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, *were* sixty-six **persons** [*nepeš* 5315] in all" (Gen 46:26); "Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No **one** [*nepeš* 5315] among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood' " (Lev 17:12); "Your eye shall not pity: **life** [*nepeš* 5315] *shall be* for **life** [*nepeš* 5315], eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deu 19:21).

This same word is also used for animals: "Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of **living creatures** [*nepeš* 5315], and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens" (Gen 1:20); "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the **living creature** [*nepeš* 5315] according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind'; and it was so" (Gen 1:24); "'Also, to **every beast** of the earth, to **every bird** of the air, and to **everything that creeps** on the earth, in which *there is life* [*nepeš* 5315], *I have given* every green herb for food'; and it was so" (Gen 1:30); "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every **living creature** [*nepeš* 5315] that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark,

every beast of the earth” (Gen 9:9-10); “This *is* the law of the animals and the birds and every **living creature** [*nepeš* 5315] that moves in the waters, and of every **creature** [*nepeš* 5315] that creeps on the earth” (Gen 11:46).

Furthermore, not only was man formed from the ground, “And the LORD God **formed man** of the dust of **the ground**” (Gen 2:7), but so were the animals, “**Out of the ground** the LORD God **formed every beast** of the field and every bird of the air” (Gen 2:19). And likewise, as the breath of life is in the nostrils of man, “breathed into **his nostrils the breath of life**” (Gen 2:7), so it is with the animals, “And **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**. **All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit** [*breath*] of life, all that *was* on the dry *land*, died” (Gen 7:21-22).

We don’t think of animals as non-physical beings living inside bodies that continue to live disembodied after death. Why then do we think this way about man? Man is simply a physical being—he is dust: “And the LORD God formed man **of the dust of the ground**” (Gen 2:7); “till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; **for dust you are**, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19); “And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, **which am but dust and ashes**” (Gen 18:27); “For He knows our frame; He remembers that **we are dust**” (Psalm 103:14); “All go unto one place; **all are of the dust**, and all turn to dust again” (Ecc 3:20); “Then shall **the dust return to the earth** as it was: and the spirit [*breath*] shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc 12:7).

There’s no such thing as a “spirit” being

The popular teaching today is that man is a non-physical spirit being living inside a physical body as though wearing the body like a suit of clothes. At death man simply slips out of the body and continues living disembodied in either heaven or hell. However, the creation account of man doesn’t depict the making of a non-physical spirit being and then a body formed around him. Rather, a body was formed then God animated this body to life by breathing into his nostrils.

The main verses used to proof-text that man is a spirit being: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the **spirit** [*pneuma* 4151] of man which is in him?” (1Co 2:11); “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole **spirit** [*pneuma* 4151] and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th 5:23); “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and **spirit** [*pneuma* 4151], and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Although man certainly is more than just physical, these verses are being used to teach that he isn’t physical at all! It’s being taught that he is strictly a non-physical spirit being that can live just as well and even better without his physical body.

The Greek *pneuma*, translated consistently in the New Testament as “spirit,” is literally air, breath, or wind. It’s the noun form of the verb *pneo* which means “to blow.” The use of *pneo* in all seven of its occurrences agree: “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds **blew** [*pneō* 4154] ... And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds **blew** [*pneō* 4154]” (Mat 7:25,27); “And when ye see the south wind **blow** [*pneō* 4154]” (Luk 12:55); “The wind **bloweth** [*pneō* 4154] where it listeth” (Jhn 3:8); “And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that **blew** [*pneō* 4154]” (Jhn 6:18); “and hoised up the mainsail to the **wind** [*pneō* 4154]” (Act 27:40); “that the wind should not **blow** [*pneō* 4154] on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree” (Rev 7:1). *Pneuma* is simply air, breath, or wind as its verb counterpart attests. It’s also where our English

“pneumatics,” “pneumonia,” and “pneumology” are derived—all involving air or breath. There’s nothing inherent in the word *pneuma* that implies a conscious living personal being.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ compared *pneuma* with the wind blowing, “**The wind [pneuma 4151] bloweth [pneō 4154]** where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of **the Spirit [pneuma 4151]**” (Jhn 3:8). And He demonstrated it as breath by blowing from His mouth onto His disciples, “And when he had said this, **he breathed on them**, and saith unto them, Receive ye **the Holy Ghost [pneuma 4151]**” (Jhn 20:22).

The translators of the New Testament did us no favors by their inconsistency in correctly rendering the verb *pneō* as “blow,” but the noun *pneuma* incorrectly as “spirit,” implying a conscious living being. There’s no such thing as a “spirit” being because *pneuma* is simply air, breath, or wind.

Now, God Himself, as well as angels and demons, are called *pneuma*: “God is a Spirit [pneuma 4151]” (Jhn 4:24); “Who maketh his angels spirits [pneuma 4151]” (Heb 1:7); “Are they not all ministering spirits [pneuma 4151]” (Heb 1:14); “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits [pneuma 4151] with *his* word” (Mat 8:16); “And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits [pneuma 4151], to cast them out” (Mat 10:1). But this isn’t the literal use of the word but metaphorical. They’re all *pneuma* in the sense that, like the wind, they can’t be seen but can be felt. They’re invisible yet affect and influence this visible world. *Pneuma* in these cases isn’t stating what they’re made of—some kind of “spirit” composition. But depicting how they’re felt, discerned, or perceived—as breath or wind. For those reading the New Testament in their native Greek language, the literal and metaphorical uses aren’t difficult to distinguish.

Man isn’t a non-physical being living inside a physical body. He is a living soul, “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 soul [nepeš 5315]**” (Gen 2:7). The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *nepeš* is *psychē* as understood by Paul’s quote of Moses’ statement, “The first man Adam was made **a living soul [psychē G5590]**” (1Co 15:45). Also by Peter’s quote of David, “For thou wilt not leave my **soul [nepeš 5315]** in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psa 16:10), “Because thou wilt not leave my **soul [psychē G5590]** in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Act 2:27).

Of course *psychē* is where the English words psychiatrist, psychologist, and psychosis are derived—all involving the mind. The soul consists of mental faculties, memory, will, personality, emotions, imagination, heart, and conscience. But inner soul of man doesn’t imply a separate being that can live autonomously without his physical body.

Jesus Christ taught us the difference between the body and the soul, “And fear not them which kill **the body**, but are not able to kill **the soul [psychē G5590]**: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both **soul [psychē G5590]** and body in **hell [geenna 1067]**” (Mat 10:28). People can kill the body but they can’t destroy the soul, the inner composition that makes each individual who they are. Only God can destroy or annihilate the soul and body completely by throwing both into *geenna*—the lake of fire. This difference is also discerned in what was stated by David and Peter concerning Christ’s burial in His tomb, “Because thou wilt not leave my **soul [psychē G5590]** in **hell [hadēs 86]**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to **see corruption**” (Act 2:27), “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his **soul [psychē G5590]** was not left in **hell [hadēs 86]**, neither his flesh did **see corruption**” (Act 2:31). The word being translated “hell” here isn’t *geenna* which

is the lake of fire, but *hadēs* which is a grave or tomb where dead bodies are buried. Christ's soul was in the tomb while He was dead—it wasn't a living conscious being that went to heaven apart from His body. In the resurrection, God restored His life and soul.

Life and death

Humans are physical beings animated or made alive by the breath of God. At death, the breath in man's nostrils returns to God: "Let the LORD, the God of **the spirits [breaths] of all flesh**" (Num 27:16); "Then **the dust will return to the earth** as it was, and the **spirit [breath] will return to God who gave it**" (Ecc 12:7); "And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My **spirit [breath]**' " Having said this, **He breathed His last**" (Luk 23:46); "And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my **spirit [breath]**'" (Acts 7:59); "the Father of **spirits [breaths]**" (Heb 12:9), "For as the body without **the spirit [breath]** is dead" (Jam 2:26).

When someone dies they don't continue living as a disembodied non-physical being but are dead and no longer living. The dead know nothing and have no consciousness. They're not praising God in heaven right now because the dead cannot praise at all: "For the living know that they shall die: **but the dead know not any thing**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten" (Ecc 9:5); "**For in death there is no remembrance of thee**: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Psa 6:5); "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? **shall the dead arise and praise thee?** Selah. Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? *or thy faithfulness in destruction?*" (Psa 88:10-11); "**The dead praise not the LORD**, neither any that go down into silence" (Psa 115:17); "**For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee**: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. **The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day**: the father to the children shall make known thy truth." (Isa 38:18-19); "For he is **not a God of the dead, but of the living**: for all live unto him" (Luk 20:38).

To be alive is to see light but to be dead is to be in darkness: "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and **his life shall see the light** ... To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with **the light of the living**" (Job 33:28, 30); "He shall go to the generation of his fathers; **they shall never see light**" (Psa 49:19); "For thou hast delivered my soul from **death**: *wilt not thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I may walk before God **in the light of the living?**" (Psa 56:13); "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into **outer darkness**" (Mat 8:12); "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into **outer darkness**" (Mat 22:13); "In him was life; and **the life was the light of men**" (Jhn 1:4); "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have **the light of life**" (Jhn 8:12); "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom **the mist of darkness is reserved for ever**" (2Pe 2:17); "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved **the blackness of darkness for ever**" (Jde 1:13).

Death passed upon all men

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; **and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned**: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. **Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses**, even over

them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, **who is the figure of him that was to come.** (Romans 5:12-14)

Paul wasn't saying here, as taught nowadays, that because of Adam's sin some kind of spiritual death passed upon all mankind. Rather, it's simply ceasing to be alive because dying and returning to the ground is the curse that God pronounced upon Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground**; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, **and unto dust shalt thou return**" (Gen 3:19). That Adam was a figure or type of Christ to come indicates that because of Adam's sin we all die and return to the ground, but because of Christ's righteousness we all can be resurrected from the ground to eternal life. And this is the same correlation Paul drew when teaching the Corinthians about the resurrection, "For since by man *came* **death**, by man *came* also **the resurrection of the dead**. For as **in Adam all die**, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive.**" (1Co 15:21-22).

Paul went on to say that although death has been reigning over us, one day we shall reign in life, "For if by one man's offence **death reigned [basileuō 936]** by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **shall reign [basileuō 936] in life by one, Jesus Christ**" (Rom 5:17). But this reigning in life, according to John, is realized once we are made alive in the first resurrection:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; **and they lived and reigned [basileuō 936] with Christ a thousand years**. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection**. Blessed and holy *is* **he that hath part in the first resurrection**: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, **and shall reign [basileuō 936] with him a thousand years**. (Revelation 20:4-6)

Paul will go on to contrast eternal life and death, "That as **sin hath reigned unto death**, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto **eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom 5:21), "For the wages of **sin is death**; but the gift of God *is* **eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom 6:23). Thus death is to no longer be alive while eternal life is to never see death again. Eternal life is victory over death that has been reigning over mankind because of Adam's sin.

The wages of sin is death

Scripture is consistent that death is the penalty for our sins: "for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**" (Gen 2:17); "every man shall be **put to death for his own sin**" (Deu 24:16); "but every man shall **die for his own sin**" (2Ch 25:4); "**he shall die**: because thou hast not given him warning, **he shall die in his sin**" (Eze 3:20); "the soul that **sinneth, it shall die**" (Eze 18:4); "The soul that **sinneth, it shall die**" (Eze 18:20); "I said therefore unto you, that **ye shall die in your sins**: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, **ye shall die in your sins**" (Jhn 8:24); "and **death by sin**; and so death passed upon all men, for that **all have sinned**" (Rom 5:12); "That as **sin hath reigned unto death**" (Rom 5:21); "For the **wages of sin is death**" (Rom 6:23); "**The sting of death is sin**; and the strength of sin *is* the law" (1Co 15:56); "For if ye **live after the flesh, ye shall die**" (Rom 8:13); "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: **and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death**" (Jas 1:15).

If the penalty for our sins is eternity in fire, then how could Christ's death have paid that penalty? But if we understand that death is actually the penalty for our sins then it makes sense that Christ's death paid that penalty. His death on the cross paid for our sins and saved us from the penalty for our sins which is death.

Eternal life is continuity or perpetuity of life without ever dying

Eternal life is simply living perpetually without ever dying again. Since we're physical beings in bondage to the power of death, we don't have eternal life right now for the simple reason that we're all going to die. Many Christians claim to have eternal life right now because of some supposed quality of life called "eternal life," though knowing they're going to die someday. But if we truly have eternal life right now then we wouldn't ever die.

"Knowing that **Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more**; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom 6:9). Here Paul said that Christ "dieth no more" which he defined in context as eternal life, "**eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom 5:21), "**eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom 6:23). To live eternally is to die no more. It's to have endless life, "Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of **an endless life**" (Heb 7:16), "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he **ever liveth** to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). Jesus Himself said, "*I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, **I am alive for evermore**, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev 1:18). Though He was dead yet now He is alive and lives forevermore. This is eternal life.

It's because death itself will forever be destroyed that we will live forever: "**He will swallow up death in victory**; and the Lord GOD will **wipe away tears from off all faces**; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*" (Isa 25:8); "**I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death**: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes" (Hos 13:14); "The last enemy *that* shall be **destroyed is death**" (1Co 15:26); "And deliver them who through **fear of death were all their lifetime** subject to bondage" (Heb 2:15); "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and **there shall be no more death**, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are **passed away**" (Rev 21:4). Eternal life is the result of no more death.

Do we have eternal life right now?

There are a few statements from the writings of John often used as proof-texts that Christians have eternal life right now as some kind of quality of life. When Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life**, and shall not come into **condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (Jhn 5:24), He was talking about the resurrection from the grave to eternal life, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are **in the graves** shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto **the resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto **the resurrection of damnation**" (Jhn 5:28-29). Therefore, to be "passed from death unto life" is to be dead in the grave but then raised to eternal life without coming into condemnation or damnation. Those who partake in the first resurrection are "passed from death unto life" because they will not die a second time, "Blessed and

holy *is* he that hath part in **the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev 20:6).

In his first letter, John quoted Christ’s words “passed from death unto life” in the context of Abel’s death, “**Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother**. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have **passed from death unto life**, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother **abideth in death**.” (1Jo 3:12-14). To be “passed from death unto life” is not about some kind of spiritual death because he was talking about Abel’s murder! His shed blood was pleading his innocence, “And he said, What hast thou done? **the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground**” (Gen 4:10). Being “passed from death unto life” is resurrection from death to life.

Jesus told us that He will raise the dead to life at the last day: “raise it up again at the last day” (Jhn 6:39); I will raise him up at the last day” (Jhn 6:40); “I will raise him up at the last day” (Jhn 6:44). He then said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me **hath everlasting life**” (Jhn 6:47). And He went on to say, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, **hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day**” (Jhn 6:54). Having eternal life is having the hope of being raised up on the last day.

When John said “that ye may know that **ye have eternal life**” (1Jo 5:13), he had already defined eternal life at the beginning of his letter, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have **seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled**, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that **eternal life**, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)” (1Jo 1:1-2). Eternal life is the bodily resurrected Christ which all the disciples saw and handled, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: **handle me**, and see; for a spirit hath not **flesh and bones**, as ye see me have” (Luk 24:39), “Then saith he to Thomas, **Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side**: and be not faithless, but believing” (Jhn 20:27). Because Christ died and was raised to eternal life, we now have the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We don’t have eternal life as some kind of inward spiritual condition. We have eternal life as the hope of one day being resurrected from death as Christ was.

Since life ends at death, we don’t have eternal life right now. We’ll have eternal life at the resurrection from the dead because we won’t die a second time, “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in **the first -resurrection: on such the second death hath no power**” (Rev 20:6). Eternal life is resurrection from death to never die again. Jesus said that we will have eternal life in the world to come, “But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and **in the world to come eternal life**” (Mar 10:30), “Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and **in the world to come life everlasting**” (Luk 18:30).

Christ became a physical being

The ontology of human beings has great implications on the incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ because if humans are strictly physical beings then when “the Word was made flesh” (Jhn 1:14), He was made a physical being exactly like us. As a physical being He truly died but was made alive to never die again. This is how eternal life is defined in Scripture and this is our hope.

On the other hand, if humans are non-physical beings living inside bodies like flesh suits then Christ was simply covered or cloaked with flesh as taught in Trinitarianism. Supposedly, humans are non-physical beings living inside physical bodies consisting of only one nature—a 100% human being. But Christ, though also a non-physical being living inside a physical body, consists of two natures—a 100% divine being covered with flesh as a 100% human being. How does any of that make sense?

The implication is that if His flesh is what made Him human then when He died and was no longer in the flesh, He was no longer human! If He was a single-nature being that became a dual-nature being through the incarnation, then He must have reverted back to a single-nature being in His death but then back to a dual-nature being through His resurrection. Essentially there's no difference between His incarnation and resurrection—He just put on, took off, and put on flesh repeatedly.

The problem with Trinitarianism is that if Christ is a 100% divine being and a 100% human being at the same time then He is actually two beings or two persons in one. Therefore, the myth of natures was invented. What is a *nature*? It's nothing but a concept to make this doctrine more palatable. It's now an easier sell that He has two natures yet is still only one person.

Because humans are physical flesh and blood beings, the Son of God actually was made flesh—a physical flesh and blood human being. He transitioned from a 100% divine being to a 100% human being. He truly died then was truly made alive, “being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit [*breath*]” (1Pe 3:18), “*I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev 1:18).

When He died, His breath in His nostrils returned to God until breathed back into Him. He committed His breath to His Father then exhaled His last breath, “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, **Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit [*breath*]**: and having said thus, **he gave up the ghost [*exhaled*]**” (Luk 23:46). He committed Himself to His Father to judge Him righteously after having been executed through an unrighteous trial, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but **committed himself to him that judgeth righteously**” (1Pe 2:23), “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, **the just for the unjust**, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, **but quickened by the Spirit [*breath*]**” (1Pe 3:18).

The promise of resurrection by God's breath, “the promise of the Spirit [*breath*]” (Gal 3:14), was made to the Seed of Abraham, “till **the seed** should come **to whom the promise was made**” (Gal 3:19). And the Father kept His promise, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and **having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost [*breath*]**” (Act 2:33). Christ became a physical being like us, died, then was raised to eternal life by the Father breathing life back into Him. This is the hope of eternal life in Him—we also will have life breathed back into us after death.

Throughout human history before Christ, everyone has died and everyone has remained dead. Nobody ever overcame death to live forever. But we are assured that Christ is the only way of salvation because He did overcome death. Therefore, our hope of victory over death is in Christ's resurrection as the exemplar of ours. But for humans to be resurrected like Him, He had to first become human like us. If He overcame death as some kind of dual-nature being, then we have no hope because we're not dual-nature beings like Him. He became just like us, so we can become just like Him. This is the eternal life taught in the Scriptures.

The rapture hoax

The event of Christ's second coming has been marginalized by the false teaching of the rapture. Because we've been duped into believing a supposed event named "rapture" after the Latin *raptus* ("a carrying up"), we give little attention, comparatively, to the true event of Christ's second coming. We're more excited about going up than about Christ coming back!

Martha saith unto him, **I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, **though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.** Believest thou this? (John 11:24-26)

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward **they that are Christ's at his coming** ... Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** (1 Corinthians 15:23, 51-52).

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, **that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord** shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them** in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

All three of these passages speak of the dead being raised back to life while those alive at that time will never die but remain alive. The resurrection of the dead was taught throughout the Scriptures but the question would inevitably arise (pun intended!) about what happens to the righteous *living* when Christ returns to raise the righteous dead. If He is coming to raise the dead, then will He have to kill the living so they can also be raised along with them? Paul said, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." The fate of those still alive when the dead are raised had been kept secret in a mystery but was now revealed.

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, **he shall never see death**" (Jhn 8:51), "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me **shall never die**" (Jhn 11:26). Likewise Paul said, "**We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**" (1Co 15:51) and "**we which are alive *and remain* unto the coming of the Lord**" (1Th 4:15). That "we which are alive *and remain*" indicates that Christ isn't going to kill those who are alive when He returns but they will remain alive. The dead will be raised back to life while those still alive will never see death but remain alive and be caught up together with them. There is, therefore, a generation of the righteous that truly have eternal life since they'll never see death.

There is no independent rapture event. This is simply a popular doctrine that sells lots of books. The event we anticipate is Christ's second coming to raise the dead and catch up the living along with them. Of course this means that everyone goes through the tribulation period. But sadly, because of such false teaching as the rapture, many will be ill prepared for the tribulation.

Now, after being hoodwinked into believing in a rapture, we've digressed into endless hours of arguing and debating about this event being pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation. We're wasting precious time on this complete non-issue that could be spent productively serving Christ. "Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they **strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**" (2Ti 2:14-15). False doctrine gets us striving and arguing about things that are unprofitable; completely wasting time we're supposed to be using in serving the Lord.

Who is in heaven?

Here are three simple facts: (1) there are many Scriptures that state God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are in heaven; (2) there are many Scriptures that state angels are in heaven; (3) there's not a single Scripture that states humans go to heaven after death. There are a handful of Scriptures from which it's assumed that people go to heaven after they die but none that actually state this: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**" (Mat 6:19-20); "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom **the whole family in heaven and earth** is named" (Eph 3:14-15); "For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phl 3:20); "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, **reserved in heaven for you**" (1Pe 1:3-4).

It's only an assumption that since our treasure is in heaven that we'll be going there to claim it, or that having citizenship in heaven means going to live there someday. If there is nothing in the Scriptures about going to heaven after death, then why do we believe this? It's because the spiritual or non-material abodes of heaven, hell, and purgatory are necessary in RCC doctrines to support the practice of selling indulgences. A spiritual place called purgatory requires alternative spiritual places as well. If our loved ones are alive in purgatory right now, then everyone else that has died must be alive someplace else. Therefore, the saints are already in heaven, the not-quite-saints are in purgatory trying to make it into heaven, and everyone else is burning in hell. Essentially, the RCC turned God's abode in heaven to mankind's place, and the lake of fire where the unrighteous bodily resurrected will one day be burned, into a spiritual place where disembodied people are now burning.

What is our hope?

There's nowhere in Scripture it's stated that we go to heaven after we die, and nowhere it's stated that heaven is our hope. However, there are many places that speak of our hope in Christ's return: "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7); "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phl 3:20); "And to wait for his Son from heaven" (1Th 1:10); "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are not even ye* in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1Th 2:19); "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 3:13); "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope ... unto the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:13,15); "for an helmet, the hope of salvation ... unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 5:8,23); "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him" (2Th 2:1); "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:13); "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb 9:28); "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the

coming of the Lord ... for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas 5:7-8); "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:16); "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1Jo 3:2-3); "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jde 1:21); "Behold, I come quickly ... And, behold, I come quickly ... Surely I come quickly" (Rev 22:7,12,20).

What really is our hope? Is it us going to Him, or is it Him coming to us? Why anticipate His return if we're already going to be with Him in heaven? And if we're already with Him in heaven, why should we have to return to the earth to be put back into our bodies? Why have bodies at all? And why is it even called the "resurrection of the dead" (Mat 22:31; Act 23:6,24:15,1; 1Co 15:13,21,42; Phl 3:11; Heb 6:2), or "resurrection from the dead" (Luk 20:35; Act 4:2; Rom 1:4), when we're not really dead at all but very much alive, and maybe even more alive than before we died?

If we think that the dead are in heaven right now with the Lord then we'll read this statement, "them also which sleep in Jesus will God **bring with him**" (1Th 4:14), to mean that they'll return with the Lord when He returns. Therefore, it's not just the second coming of the Lord but the second coming of everyone! But actually, "bring with him" is not during His return from heaven but after their resurrection to meet Him in the air, "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up together with them** in the clouds, **to meet the Lord** in the air: and **so shall we ever be with the Lord**" (1Th 4:17). Nobody meets Him until He returns to meet them. We should sorrow not as the world does when they lose their loved ones, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, **concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope**" (1Th 4:13). The hope Paul gave was not of seeing them again in heaven but rather of seeing them again when Christ returns and raises them from the dead. We'll all meet the Lord and be reunited with our saved loved ones at His return.

It makes no sense that God created us as non-physical beings inside physical bodies that can live perfectly well and even better without physical bodies; then after death we live for hundreds and even thousands of years without physical bodies in a much better place in which we weren't even created to live; then we leave heaven to be put back into our physical bodies to return back to heaven. What makes sense is that we were created as physical beings whose only hope is Christ's return to raise us back to life and live forever on this earth.

First Corinthians chapter 15 was Paul's argument against those in the church at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, **how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?**" (1Co 15:12). One of his many arguments was that if there is no resurrection then those who already died have perished, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. **Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.**" (1Co 15:17-18). But if those who already died are in heaven right now then they haven't perished—they're still alive as disembodied beings. This certainly doesn't prove Paul's point. But if it's understood that humans are physical beings which can only live again by being resurrected then the dead have in fact perished if there is no resurrection. The resurrection is the reason the dead haven't perished because they have the hope of living again.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord**" (1Co 15:58). Here at the end of his discourse on the resurrection, Paul stated that this is the hope of our labors in this life not being in vain. This also agrees with what Jesus said, "for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luk 14:14). If there is no

resurrection then we take nothing of our labor, “As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and **shall take nothing of his labour**, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and **what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?**” (Ecc 5:15-16). On the other hand, if the dead are in heaven right now then they’re already with their treasure in heaven and resurrection isn’t really necessary. But it’s because if there is no resurrection then the dead have in fact perished and all of their labors were in vain—they labored for the wind.

Our final destiny

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. **And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,** prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, **Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them,** and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: **for the former things are passed away.** (Revelation 21:1-4)

Scripture is clear that the earth will be renewed and we’ll dwell on it forever. There will be no more death, sorrow, or crying. We won’t go to dwell with God in heaven but rather He will come and dwell with us on this earth, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and **he will dwell with them,** and they shall be his people, and **God himself shall be with them, and be** their God” (Rev 21:3).

Jesus said that we’ll inherit land, “Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the **earth [gē 1093]**” (Mat 5:5). The Greek *gē* for “earth” appears about 250 times in the New Testament and doesn’t speak of the entire planet but simply about land on the earth, “And thou Bethlehem, *in* the **land [gē 1093] of Juda**” (Mat 2:6), “The **land [gē 1093] of Zabulon,** and the **land [gē 1093] of Nephtholim**” (Mat 4:15).

Jesus’ statement “Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the **earth [land]**” (Mat 5:5), is a quote from Psalm 37 concerning our future permanent land inheritance: “Trust in the LORD, and do good; **so shalt thou dwell in the land [‘ereṣ 776],** and verily thou shalt be fed” (Psa 37:3); “For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, **they shall inherit the earth [‘ereṣ 776]**” (Psa 37:9); “**But the meek shall inherit the earth [‘ereṣ 776];** and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psa 37:11); “For *such as be* blessed of him **shall inherit the earth [‘ereṣ 776];** and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off” (Psa 37:22); “The righteous **shall inherit the land [‘ereṣ 776],** and dwell therein for ever” (Psa 37:29); “Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee **to inherit the land [‘ereṣ 776]:** when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*” (Psa 37:34).

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, **unto a land [‘ereṣ 776] that I will shew thee:** And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: **and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.** (Genesis 12:1-3)

Paul quoted from this passage and taught that this was the Lord preaching the gospel to Abraham, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, **preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.** So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Gal 3:8-9). The gospel message isn’t a hope of going to heaven but rather of permanent land inheritance just as it had been preached to Abraham: “And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this **land [‘ereş 776]** and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him” (Gen 12:7); “For all the **land [‘ereş 776]** which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever ... Arise, walk through the **land [‘ereş 776]** in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” (Gen 13:15, 17); “And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this **land [‘ereş 776]** to inherit it” (Gen 15:7); “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the **land [‘ereş 776]** wherein thou art a stranger, all the **land [‘ereş 776]** of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen 17:8).

Although Abraham was rich and could very well have purchased some of the land he was dwelling on, instead he sojourned and hoped to receive it as a permanent inheritance. This could only happen by him being resurrected one day and being given land permanently by God. Therefore, Abraham’s hope wasn’t heaven but land inheritance on this earth. This earth will be renewed from the curse and we’ll dwell on our own land inheritance physically and permanently. This is our true hope and eternal destiny.

Sleep is figurative of death

In the Old Testament, the death of God’s people was said to be like sleep: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt **sleep with thy fathers**” (Deu 31:16); “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt **sleep with thy fathers**” (2Sa 7:12); “for now shall I **sleep in the dust**” (Job 7:21); “And many of them that **sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake**, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2).

Jesus taught that death is like sleep for those who are raised back to life: “Give place: for the maid is **not dead, but sleepeth**” (Mat 9:24); “the damsel is **not dead, but sleepeth**” (Mar 5:39); “**Our friend Lazarus sleepeth**; but I go, that I may **awake him out of sleep.** Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. **Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.**” (Jhn 11:11-14).

This likeness of sleep for death continued in the early church: “And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, **he fell asleep.**” (Act 7:60); “For **David**, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, **fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers**, and saw corruption” (Act 13:36); “For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and **many sleep**” (1Co 11:30); “Then they also which are **fallen asleep in Christ** are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of **them that slept.**” (1Co 15:18-20); “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning **them which are asleep** ... even so **them also which sleep in Jesus** will God bring with him ... unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent **them which are asleep.**” (1Th 4:13-15).

There’s no such thing as a concept of soul-sleep taught by some. Everyone who dies, whether righteous or unrighteous, is truly dead and no longer living. The Scriptures speak of death as sleep only figuratively. We can

be sure of this because of the words of Jesus Christ, “Our friend Lazarus **sleepeth**; but I go, that I may **awake him out of sleep** ... Then said Jesus unto them **plainly, Lazarus is dead**” (Jhn 11:11, 14). The figurative speech is sleep—the plain speech is death. It’s because the righteous dead will come back to life that it’s like a sleeping person waking up. And this figure of speech only makes sense if the dead truly are dead and not still alive somewhere else.

Sleep is figurative of death in several ways. As we’re not conscious when sleeping, so it is with death. And as there seems to be no time in sleep, so it is with death. We can sleep for hours straight but it seems like only a blink of the eye once we awake. This is how it is with the dead. Although Abel has been dead for almost six thousand years, it will only seem like a blink when he’s brought back to life. He’ll have no awareness of how long he was dead. Finally, sleep is like death because we only see darkness but then rise up to seeing light.

Hell

The Greek *geenna* is the word typically translated as “hell” in the New Testament. It appears in seven different passages: Matthew 5:22-30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15-33; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5; James 3:6. Five of these seven passages put either the whole body or members of the body there:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of **hell [geenna 1067]** fire. ... And if thy **right eye** offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that **one of thy members** should perish, and not *that thy whole body* should be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]**. And if thy **right hand** offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that **one of thy members** should perish, and not *that thy whole body* should be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]**. (Matthew 5:22, 29-30)

And fear not them which **kill the body**, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and **body in hell [geenna 1067]**. (Matthew 10:28)

And if **thine eye** offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with **one eye**, rather than having **two eyes** to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]** fire. (Matthew 18:9)

And if **thy hand** offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having **two hands** to go into **hell [geenna 1067]**, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if **thy foot** offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having **two feet** to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]**, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if **thine eye** offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with **one eye**, than having **two eyes** to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]** fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:43-48)

And **the tongue** is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is **the tongue** among **our members**, that it defileth **the whole body**, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of **hell** [*geenna* 1067]. (James 3:6)

Since the majority of *geenna* passages place people there physically, then this is the lake of fire where people are thrown after they've been resurrected, "**And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them:** and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were **cast into the lake of fire.** This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was **cast into the lake of fire.**" (Rev 20:13-15). Therefore, *geenna* isn't an intermittent place of fire where disembodied beings go after death but rather the lake of fire where people go after being resurrected from death.

Since *geenna* is the lake of fire, then Scripture is apparently silent about where the unrighteous go after they die. Actually, the Bible isn't silent about where they go. The righteous and unrighteous all go to the same place—the grave. Humans are physical beings created from the dust of the earth and animated by the breath of God in the nostrils. At death everyone goes back to the dust waiting for resurrection. The dead in Christ will be resurrected when He returns to live with Him forever on the renewed earth. The unrighteous, on the other hand, will be resurrected after the Millennium to face judgment and die a second time by being thrown physically into *geenna*.

In the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, it's "in the end of this world" that Jesus puts the wicked in the fire, "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; **the harvest is the end of the world;** and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and **burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.**" (Mat 13:39-40). There's nothing here about a temporary place of torment where beings go before the end. Again, in the story of the Sheep and Goats the wicked go into the fire after Christ comes, "**When the Son of man shall come in his glory**, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory ... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, **Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,** prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:31,41).

At the end of Isaiah, this place of fire is said to exist in the renewed earth, "**For as the new heavens and the new earth**, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain ... And they shall go forth, and **look upon the carcasses** [*peġer* 6297] of the men that have transgressed against me: **for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched**" (Isa 66:22,24). The Hebrew word *peġer* appears 21 other times in the Old Testament and is always used for carcasses or dead bodies. According to Isaiah this place of fire is not for the living but for the dead. Jesus quoted Isaiah's statement and called this place *geenna*:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into **hell** [*geenna* 1067], into the fire that never shall be quenched: **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into **hell** [*geenna* 1067], into the fire that never shall be quenched: **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into **hell** [*geenna* 1067] **fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** (Mark 9:43-48)

Worms and fire together don't make sense if someone is still alive at the time. Aren't the worms being burned alive as well? Why don't the worms die? Are they super fire-resistant worms? And if someone says that the worms are not literal but only figurative, then they must also say that the fire is not literal either. What makes sense is that the lake of fire is a literal and material mass grave for the carcasses of the unrighteous. It's a grave where worms begin the decomposition process of the bodies before they're eventually cremated in fire to never live again. The lake of fire is a place of total annihilation.

The Greek *hadēs* is the grave where dead bodies are buried, "**death and hell [hadēs 86]** were cast into the lake of fire. This is **the second death**" (Rev 20:14). The lake of fire is a second grave for those who die a second time. The unrighteous will be resurrected back to life in order to be judged, punished, and put to death a second time before being completely annihilated in this mass grave. Jude spoke of the second death as darkness forever, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, **twice dead**, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved **the blackness of darkness for ever**" (Jde 1:12-13).

When a person dies, they're actually dead and their only hope of living again is to be brought back to life by being physically resurrected from the grave. This is why the second death in the book of Revelation is actually dying physically a second time and being cremated or annihilated in the lake of fire: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of **the second death**" (Rev 2:11); "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in **the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years ... And **death and hell [hadēs 86]** were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death.**" (Rev 20:6, 14); "**the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**" (Rev 21:8).

Jesus taught annihilation

The Greek *geenna* is a transliteration of the Hebrew noun [*gay'* 1516] which means "valley" and the proper locative noun [*hinnōm* 2011]. This place in the Old Testament was a mass grave just outside Jerusalem where bodies were burned, "And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in **the valley [gay' 1516] of the children of Hinnom [hinnōm 2011]**, that no man might **make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire** to Molech" (2Ki 23:10); "Moreover he burnt incense in **the valley [gay' 1516] of the son of Hinnom [hinnōm 2011]**, and burnt **his children in the fire**" (2Ch 28:3); "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in **the valley [gay' 1516] of the son of Hinnom [hinnōm 2011]**, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire" (Jer 7:31). This is what Jesus was referring to when He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more **the child of hell [geenna 1067]** than yourselves" (Mat 23:15). As men had burnt their children in *hinnōm*, the "children" of the scribes and Pharisees were their proselytes they were leading to *geenna*.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* **thy whole body should be cast into hell [geenna 1067]**. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* **thy whole body should be cast into hell [geenna 1067]**. (Matthew 5:29-30)

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into **hell [geenna 1067]**, into the fire that never shall be quenched: **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]**, into the fire that never shall be quenched: **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]** fire: **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** (Mark 9:43-48)

That the whole body or members of the body such as the eyes, hands, and feet should be cast into *geenna* speaks of a bodily resurrected person, not a disembodied person. Furthermore, worms indicate a physical place for the decomposition of physical bodies. After all, if it's a spiritual abode for disembodied spirit beings, then the worms must also be spiritual worms! And bodies being decomposed by worms suggests the finality of death unto total destruction and annihilation.

After the great white throne judgment, the righteous will actually pass by this mass grave and see the corpses of the unrighteous in various stages of decomposition and cremation, "And they shall go forth, and **look upon the carcases of the men** that have transgressed against me: for **their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched**; and they shall be **an abhorring unto all flesh**" (Isa 66:24). Because of God's just judgment on their sins against Him, they'll be abhorred by everyone that passes by. After this, the earth will be renewed from the curse and death will be no more, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be **no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain**: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:4).

Jesus also contrasted annihilation with eternal life: "That whosoever believeth in him should not **perish [apollymi 622]**, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not **perish [apollymi 622]**, but have everlasting life." (Jhn 3:15-16); "And I give unto them **eternal life**; and they shall never **perish [apollymi 622]**, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand" (Jhn 10:28); "He that loveth his life shall **lose [apollymi 622]** it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto **life eternal**" (Jhn 12:25). Those who don't have eternal life will perish. They will die and never live again—annihilation.

The book of life

After Israel committed idolatry by worshipping the golden calf, Moses pleaded for them and requested to have his name blotted out of God's book instead, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, **blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.** And the LORD said unto Moses, **Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.**" (Exo 32:32-33). Recounting this event 40 years later, Moses gave further details, "Let me alone, that **I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven**: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they" (Deu 9:14). According to Moses, someone's name being blotted out of the book of life is having it blotted out from under heaven—annihilation.

Those whose names are not found written in the book of life will be annihilated in the lake of fire, "And whosoever was **not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire**" (Rev 20:15), "And they shall go forth, and look upon **the carcases of the men** that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall

not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and **they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh**" (Isa 66:24). They will be annihilated and all remembrance of them, even their name, will forever be blotted out as though they never lived. Nobody will ever remember them.

Problems with eternal torture in fire

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. **For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren**, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:1-3). Paul's wish is absolutely unfathomable if the destiny of the unrighteous is actually eternal torture in fire. How could anyone wish this for themselves? But if the destiny of the unrighteous is annihilation to never exist again, then Paul's wish, albeit still difficult to grasp, is far more palatable.

The punishment of eternal torture in fire raises all kinds of difficult questions: How can eternal torture in fire be the punishment for those who've never even heard the gospel and had the possibility of avoiding it? How can eternal torture in fire be the same punishment for everyone regardless of how moral or immoral they lived? How can eternal torture in fire be fair for all when some have already been burning for thousands of years while others are just getting started? And what's so bad about the seven-year tribulation period when compared with being burned alive eternally? Seven years of tribulation is a luxury resort by comparison. And why does God punish people in fire before judging them? Then why raise them out of the fire, put them back into their bodies, judge and throw them back into the fire? Also, are there two places of fire? Is there a temporary hell for disembodied beings and also a permanent lake of fire after they have been resurrected? The Bible only speaks of one place of fire which is *geenna*, the lake of fire where people are thrown physically after the resurrection. Nothing is said of any temporary or intermittent place between the time of death and resurrection.

Eternal torture in fire goes far beyond anything reasonable and just. If anything, Scripture teaches that God is merciful and punishes us even less than our sins deserve: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exo 34:6); "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man" (2Sa 24:14); "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psa 103:10); "The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works" (Psa 145:9); "*It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lam 3:22); "Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy." (Mic 7:18); "And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this" (Ezr 9:13); "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom 2:4); "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1Pe 3:20); "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ... And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation" (2Pe 3:9, 15).

The Tree of Life

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, **lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:** Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. **So he drove out the man;** and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, **to keep the way of the tree of life.** (Genesis 3:22-24)

That man was not created as an eternal being is evident by him being given the tree of life in the garden from which to eat, “the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22). The death sentence pronounced upon man, “till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19), was enforced by him no longer having access to the tree of life that would have allowed him to continue living forever.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit [*breath*] saith unto the churches; **To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. ...** In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there the tree of life*, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ... **Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life**, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14)

Mankind’s restored access to the tree of life after the resurrection is not a formality but a necessity. We must eat from this tree continually in order to live and never die again. Why would we “have right to the tree of life” if it’s unnecessary?

The thief on the cross

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, **Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.** And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, **To day shalt thou be with me in paradise** [*paradeisos* 3857]. (Luke 23:39-43)

Too much has been made of this passage in claiming that the same day Jesus and this thief died, they both were alive together in Paradise. But if this is what Jesus was really saying, then why not just tell this man without saying it would be today? Didn’t he know he was dying that very day?

It makes more sense, however, that Jesus was simply replying to this man’s request to be remembered when He came into His kingdom, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” But rather than waiting until He came into His kingdom to remember him, He went ahead and remembered him that very day before

he died. He was not saying they would be in Paradise that day but simply saying to him that day rather than waiting until the day He came into His kingdom to say it. He was giving him assurance that day before he died.

Furthermore, Paradise is not heaven or an intermittent place for disembodied beings. The same Greek word *paradeisos* is where the tree of life grows, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit [*breath*] saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of **the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise [*paradeisos* 3857] of God**” (Rev 2:7), and the tree of life grows in the new city of Jerusalem after the renewal of the earth, “**In the midst of the street of it**, and on either side of the river, *was there the tree of life*, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2). Paradise is where resurrected people go after the Millennium in the renewed creation. Therefore, Christ and this man couldn’t have gone to Paradise that day because paradise didn’t exist in that day and still doesn’t exist today!

God is not the God of the dead

When confronted by the Sadducees about the resurrection of the dead, “The same day came to him **the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection**” (Mat 22:23), Jesus responded, “**But as touching the resurrection of the dead**, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**” (Mat 22:31-32). His answer proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob aren’t living right now but are dead. If they were alive outside their bodies, then there’s no need for the resurrection and the Sadducees won. But it’s the fact that they’re dead right now but will live again in the resurrection that Jesus won!

God is not the God of the dead because He can’t show wonders to them and they can’t praise Him, “Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee?” (Psa 88:10-11), “The dead praise not the LORD” (Psa 115:17), “For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee ... The living, the living, he shall praise thee” (Isa 38:18-19). He is the God of the living which means Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will live again one day.

The Mount of Transfiguration

And what about Peter, James, and John seeing Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, “And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him” (Mat 17:3)? Doesn’t this mean that Moses and Elijah were alive at that moment as disembodied beings? It doesn’t mean this because Jesus stated afterward that it was a vision, “And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, **Tell the vision to no man**, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead” (Mat 17:9). He had told them beforehand that they were going to see Him “coming in His kingdom” (Mat 16:28).

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you **the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, **when we were with him in the holy mount.**” (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Peter recounted that this event he experienced with James and John concerned Christ's second coming. Moses and Elijah weren't actually alive at that moment. Peter, James, and John had only seen a vision of the future kingdom in which Moses and Elijah would be alive after being resurrected at the coming of the Lord.

No man has ascended to heaven

Some quote the statement "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Eph 4:8), to mean that when Christ ascended to heaven, He led all of the Old Testament saints with Him. However, just a few days after Christ ascended, Peter said "For David is not ascended into the heavens" (Act 2:34). Apparently David slipped through the cracks and was left behind! If David, arguably the greatest Jew in Israel's history, isn't in heaven then just who is?

Now, some might argue that this only means David isn't physically in heaven in a resurrected body but is still there as a non-physical disembodied being. But it doesn't make sense that Peter would say David didn't ascend though he actually did, just nobody saw him because he was non-physical. Besides, if the *real* person is the non-physical being as it's often claimed, then it would make more sense to say that David (the real person) *did* ascend to heaven regardless of his body.

It's for the very reason the Jewish people didn't believe a person lives disembodied after death, that Christ's resurrection from the dead was substantiated, "David, that **he is both dead and buried**, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (Act 2:29), "For David is not ascended into the heavens" (Act 2:34). That David is *both* dead and buried, is that he's not still alive somewhere else outside of his body. David is still dead and buried but Christ is not!

Jesus Himself also said, "**And no man hath ascended up to heaven**, but he that **came down from heaven**, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven" (Jhn 3:13). He would be the only Man to ascend to heaven because He is the only one that came down from heaven. Christ came down from heaven and became flesh then ascended back to heaven in the flesh. We didn't come down from heaven but were created on this earth. Since we didn't come down from heaven, why should we go there after we die? And why should we go without bodies when even Christ Himself went bodily? How is it that He came from heaven without a body but went back with one, yet we originate on earth with a body but supposedly go to heaven without one? How does any of that make sense?

Since "no man hath ascended up to heaven" then Enoch and Elijah didn't ascend to heaven either: "And Enoch walked with God: **and he was not; for God took him**" (Gen 5:24), "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; **and was not found, because God had translated him**: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5), "And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; **and they sought three days, but found him not**." (2Ki 2:17). In both cases the people didn't think these men had gone to heaven where God resides because they tried to find them. That is, they believed they went up but then came back down somewhere else.

Also, in both cases they went up bodily, not as some kind of disembodied non-physical being. These events have nothing to do with the destiny of humans after they die. Furthermore, Philip experienced something similar yet *was* found, "And when they were come up out of the water, **the Spirit [*breath*] of the Lord caught**

away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. **But Philip was found** at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea” (Act 8:39-40). Since Philip was caught up but didn’t go to heaven, why should we think Enoch and Elijah went to heaven?

The Rich Man and Lazarus

The account of The Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is often used to claim that the lost are disembodied non-physical beings suffering in fire after death. However, this story is simply a parable in which the Greek *geenna* isn’t even used. It’s the last in a succession of parables that all begin similarly: “**A certain man** made a great supper” (Luk 14:16); “**A certain man** had two sons” (Luk 15:11); “There was **a certain rich man** who had a steward” (Luk 16:1); “There was **a certain rich man**” (Luk 16:19).

That this is only a parable is also substantiated by Jesus later affirming that Abraham wasn’t alive but will be alive in the resurrection, “**Now that the dead are raised**, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord **the God of Abraham**, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. **For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living**: for all live unto him.” (Luk 20:37-38). Therefore, this was a parable since Abraham wasn’t even alive for the rich man to call for him, “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me” (Luk 16:24).

Furthermore, this parable isn’t depicting an intermittent place for non-physical disembodied beings because this rich man has eyes and a tongue, “And in **hell [hadēs 86]** he **lift up his eyes**, being in torments ... and **cool my tongue**; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luk 16:23-24). He was in *hadēs* which is the grave. But the dead in the graves will be cast into the lake of fire, “**And death and hell [hadēs 86]** were cast into **the lake of fire**” (Rev 20:14). This parable isn’t about disembodied beings but about the bodily resurrected in the lake of fire.

Since the previous parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-8 was about the Pharisees, “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him” (Luk 16:14), then it follows that this next parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus would also be about them as well. This parable contains some allegorical aspects which identify the rich man as the Levitical priests, “clothed in **purple and fine linen**” (Luk 16:19), “And they shall take gold, and blue, and **purple, and scarlet, and fine linen**. And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of **purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen**, with cunning work.” (Exo 28:5-6). Also, the rich man has five brothers and Levi had five brothers all from Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun.

The rich man is a descendant of Abraham, “Father Abraham ... But Abraham said, Son” (Luk 16:24-25), while Lazarus is a Gentile, “And desiring to be **fed with the crumbs** which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover **the dogs came** and licked his sores” (Luk 16:21), “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of **the house of Israel** ... And she said, Truth, Lord: yet **the dogs eat of the crumbs** which fall from their masters’ table” (Mat 15:24, 27). Christ had taught earlier that many of God’s own people would be cast out but would see Abraham along with Gentiles, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when **ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob**, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, **and you yourselves thrust out**. And they shall come from **the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south**, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.” (Luk 13:28-29).

Besides being allegorical, this parable is also prophetic of Lazarus being raised from the dead: “Abraham saith unto him, **They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them**. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but **if**

one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, **If they hear not Moses** and the prophets, **neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.**" (Luk 16:29-31). The priests and Pharisees didn't believe that Jesus is the Prophet that Moses said would come, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (Jhn 5:46). They wouldn't hear Moses and the prophets. And even raising Lazarus from the dead didn't persuade them to repent but actually became the very catalyst for finally conspiring to put Christ to death, "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. ... Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (Jhn 11:47, 53).

Absent from the body?

This next passage is probably the most often quoted to proof-text that we're non-physical beings that leave our physical bodies at death, "absent from the body," then immediately go to be with Christ in heaven, "present with the Lord."

For we know that if our **earthly house of *this tabernacle [tent]*** were dissolved, we have a **building [house] of God, an *house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.** For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be ***clothed*** upon with our ***house which is from heaven***: If so be that being ***clothed*** we shall not be found ***naked***. For we that are in ***this tabernacle [tent]*** do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be ***unclothed***, but ***clothed*** upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit [*breath*]. Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are **at home [endemeo 1736] in the body, we are absent [ekdemeo 1553] from the Lord**: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be **absent [ekdemeo 1553] from the body, and to be present [endemeo 1736] with the Lord**. Wherefore we labour, that, whether **present [endemeo 1736] or absent [ekdemeo 1553]**, we may be accepted of him. For we must all **appear before the judgment seat of Christ**; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)

First, we should establish that this passage isn't about what happens to us when we die but what happens to us when we're resurrected. His statement "that **mortality** might be **swallowed up** of life" (2Co 5:4), concerns the resurrection Paul had taught the Corinthians in his first letter to them, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this **mortal** shall have put on **immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is **swallowed up** in victory" (1Co 15:54).

Also, being "present with the Lord" is not immediately at death but after He returns and we "appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2Co 5:10). There's nothing in this passage about an intermittent state where disembodied beings go prior to the resurrection and there's nothing here about heaven. But since this passage is being approached with the assumption that we're non-physical beings that go to heaven after death, then the translation into English is biased in that direction. This passage is simply comparing our current physical condition with that of our future resurrected physical condition.

Second, Paul used two different figures of speech when talking about our body in its current state and in its future resurrected state: (1) a tent as opposed to a house; (2) naked or unclothed as opposed to being

clothed. It's typically assumed that a tent conveys the idea that our bodies are something we *live inside* at the present time but at death we will *live outside* our bodies as disembodied beings. However, in context a tent is figurative of our current temporary state while our future resurrected state will be like a house which is permanent or eternal, "For the things which are seen **are temporary**, but the things which are not seen **are eternal**" (2Co 4:18). The tent and house metaphors are from the Old Testament where the Tabernacle of Moses was figurative of our bodies right now while Solomon's Temple was like our bodies being as a house or building in the resurrection. This is not about being disembodied but about our current temporary state as opposed to our future permanent state.

Also, "clothed" supposedly means that we're non-physical beings living inside physical bodies as if clothed by suits of flesh. But Paul was simply borrowing an expression from the beginning, "they knew that they *were* naked" (Gen 3:7). When the Son of God returned to the garden, He found Adam and Eve naked which is what Paul was hinting at, "If so be that being clothed **we shall not be found naked**" (2Co 5:3). It's as though we're in the garden walking with Christ by faithfulness, "**For we walk by faith [faithfulness]**, not by sight" (2Co 5:7). And we're walking with Him and clothed by Him so long as we're faithful to Him. Therefore, when He returns will we be found naked or faithful? "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, **shall he find faith [faithfulness] on the earth?**" (Luk 18:8).

But doesn't the "absent from the body" statement imply that we are disembodied non-physical beings after death? The Greek words *endemeo* and *ekdemeo* in "at home [*endemeo*] in the body, we are absent [*ekdemeo*] from the Lord ... absent [*ekdemeo*] from the body, and to be present [*endemeo*] with the Lord," aren't prepositions denoting our location of either inside or outside the body. If we take those meanings and apply them consistently across the passage it results in absurdity because *endemeo* translated as "at home in the body" is the same word used in "present with the Lord," and *ekdemeo* in "absent from the body" is the same word in "absent from the Lord." Therefore, if Paul was saying that we're currently living inside our bodies as non-physical beings, then he was also saying that when we leave our bodies we will then live inside the Lord's body! If he meant we're literally living inside or outside our bodies, then he also meant we're literally living inside or outside the Lord's body. Obviously he was only speaking figuratively just as he was with tent or house, and with clothed or unclothed.

The words *endemeo* and *ekdemeo* are verbs denoting action which have no English equivalents to which they can be closely translated. Their root *demos* means "people." The nearest meaning would be "peopling with" or "citizenizing with." The idea is that we're sojourners here temporarily "peopling with" each other but one day we will be permanently "peopling with" the Lord.

Those who never heard

One of the most difficult questions for Christians to answer is the destiny of those who die without having ever heard the gospel. This is problematic because we recognize that it's far beyond unjust for those who never had the opportunity for salvation to be tortured alive in fire without end. How can a loving God create vast multitudes of people as eternal beings only to allow most of them to burn alive forever with no possible escape? That's not fair and that's not love.

Preachers sometimes try to answer this by claiming that those who never heard actually have heard through the creation and their own conscience: "For the invisible things of him **from the creation of the world are**

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; **so that they are without excuse**" (Rom 1:20), "Which shew the work of the law **written in their hearts, their conscience** also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom 2:15). Therefore, since they have heard through creation and conscience, then they did have the opportunity to be saved and their fate of eternal torture in fire is just. But this explanation only opens a whole new can of worms. Why preach the gospel if everyone has already heard and is still hearing through creation and conscience? Can people really be saved that way? If people can find the true God through the creation then why does human history bear out that they have always turned to idolatry, "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom 1:23)?

However, this question of what happens to those who never heard isn't problematic once we accept the fact that man is a physical being either blessed with eternal life or else is annihilated. We recognize that animals pass from existence when they die—dogs don't go to heaven. We don't think of any unjustness done to animals being given existence for a short time then passing from existence or annihilated. Why not the same with humans? What would be unjust in God allowing humans to live for a short time then die and never live again? For them to exist then no longer exist? He's the giver of life and He can take it away.

Now, this isn't degrading the value of humans, created after the image of God, down to that of only animals. But it is affirming what Scripture actually teaches about death: "Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: **he is like the beasts that perish ... Like sheep they are laid in the grave ...** Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, **is like the beasts that perish**" (Psa 49:14, 12, 20); "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that **they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;** even one thing befalleth them: **as the one dieth, so dieth the other;** yea, they have all one breath; so that **a man hath no preeminence above a beast:** for all *is* vanity." (Ecc 3:18-19); "But these, **as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed [phthora 5356],** speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own **corruption [phthora 5356]**" (2Pe 2:12).

The Greek *phthora* used by Peter for those who perish like beasts was also used by Paul for the corruption that came upon the creation in the curse, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of **corruption [phthora 5356]** into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). And also for the corruption of the grave, "So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in **corruption [phthora 5356]; it is raised in incorruption ...** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth **corruption [phthora 5356] inherit incorruption**" (1Co 15:42, 50). It speaks of man decomposing back to the ground from which he came just as with animals.

Paul taught repeatedly in Romans that the knowledge of sin came by the law and that God doesn't hold sin against those who didn't have this knowledge: "For as many as have **sinned without law shall also perish without law:** and as many as have sinned in the law **shall be judged by the law**" (Rom 2:12); "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for **by the law is the knowledge of sin**" (Rom 3:20); "Because the law worketh wrath: **for where no law is, there is no transgression**" (Rom 4:15); "For until the law sin was in the world: but **sin is not imputed when there is no law**" (Rom 5:13); "What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, **I had not known sin, but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all

manner of concupiscence. **For without the law sin was dead.**" (Rom 7:7-8). His point was that those who sinned without the knowledge of sin won't be punished for their sins but simply perished when they died.

Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, ***he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God**, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that **God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;** and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

In this passage, the words "*he is*" are italicized indicating that they're not in the Greek text. Paul wasn't talking about people becoming some type of "new creature" but rather about the creation itself being renewed. This renewal happens in the end, "behold, all things are become new," is the creation, "And I saw **a new heaven and a new earth** ... And he that sat upon the throne said, **Behold, I make all things new**" (Rev 21:1, 5). The "old things are passed away" is death, sorrow, crying, and pain, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more **death, neither sorrow, nor crying**, neither shall there be any more **pain: for the former things are passed away**" (Rev 21:4). He was saying that those who live and die "in Christ" will be partakers of the renewed creation to live forever.

That "all things are of God" indicates that God has been working since the cursing of the creation and will continue working until its consummation in the renewing of the creation. When Paul said, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, **not imputing their trespasses unto them**," he was teaching that while God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, He wasn't imputing anyone's sins to them. This is what he also taught to the Romans, "For until the law sin was in the world: but **sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses**, even over them that **had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression**, who is the figure of him that was to come." (Rom 5:13-15).

All of humanity dies because of Adam's sin. And although everyone since Adam also sins, God didn't impute their sins to them if they hadn't sinned the same way as Adam by breaking a direct commandment from God, "had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom 5:15). They simply died and will never live again. They were without law and, therefore, perished without law, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law" (Rom 2:12).

However, this dynamic changed once God gave His commandments to His own people through Moses. Adam's offence now abounded, "Moreover the law entered, that **the offence might abound**" (Rom 5:20). Multitudes were now sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression and their sins were being imputed to them, "as many as have **sinned in the law** shall be **judged by the law**" (Rom 2:12). Those who heard God's commandments but didn't do them will live again to face judgment and be punished for their sins. But for those who never heard, however, their sins weren't imputed to them and they perished.

Now, if "the wages of sin *is* death" (Rom 6:23), and God didn't impute sin to those without law, then why did they die? Paul explained that because the law would later prove, "**For all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), therefore, God was just in sentencing death upon all in the very beginning, "and so death passed upon all men, **for that all have sinned**" (Rom 5:12). When Paul said "for that all have sinned" (Rom 5:12), he was referring back to what he had already proved earlier, "For all have sinned" (Rom 3:23). His point is that if the law proved God's own people are guilty and worthy of death, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death" (Rom 1:32), "that every mouth may be

stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom 3:19), then the whole world is worthy of death as well.

Because God didn't impute humanity's sins to them, He is, therefore, just in allowing them to perish. They simply lived for a short time then died to never live again. After all, isn't it better that they had the blessing of life for a short time than never having lived? God never had to give us life or existence in the first place. Therefore, isn't He also just in taking that life away? Job lost all ten of his children on the same day yet recognized, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: **the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away**; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, **nor charged God foolishly.**" (Job 1:21-22).

But why give life to many people and in some cases a life of pain and suffering without also giving the opportunity for eternal life? The answer seems to be that the first 4,000 years of human history were necessary in order for God to reconcile the world to Himself through Christ. He had to eventually establish a chosen people and give them a kingdom through which He would bring the Christ into the world to save the world. But why not send His Son into the world immediately after Adam sinned? Well, who would have nailed Him to the cross? There was no Roman Empire, no nation of Israel, and no Pharisees. The world had to become the way it was historically, geographically, socially, politically, religiously, and linguistically for God's plan of salvation to reach consummation which took a painfully long time. God allowed millions and possibly billions of people to perish so that a relatively small subset of humanity—His own chosen people and those who join themselves to them—would have the hope of eternal life.

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in **Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes**" (Mat 11:21), "**The men of Nineveh** shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because **they repented at the preaching of Jonas**; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here" (Mat 12:41). Jesus declared that had God sent someone to preach to the people of Tyre and Sidon they would have repented. But of course, the obvious question is why He didn't? Why send Jonah to Nineveh but nobody to Tyre and Sidon? Knowing they would have repented, why not give them that opportunity?

The answer is that God was working His greater purpose of bringing His Son into the world in order to reconcile the world to Himself. It was so that some could be saved otherwise nobody would be saved. Not everyone could be given the hope of salvation but to some it could be given. Preaching the gospel to the whole world throughout history would have been in vain had Christ not finally come and died for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, in order to accomplish this greater purpose, God had to let much of the world perish with no hope. After all, only some with hope is better than none with hope.

The creation itself was prophetic of what would come 4,000 years later, "*darkness was upon the face of the deep ... And God said, Let there be light: and there was light*" (Gen 1:2-3). Christ would come into the dark world and shine the light of His glorious gospel message, "**And the light shineth in darkness**; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jhn 1:5), "**lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God, should shine unto them ... For God, who commanded **the light to shine out of darkness**" (2Co 4:4, 6). However, the world had to be in darkness "*darkness was upon the face of the deep*" (Gen 1:2), in order for the light to shine into the darkness. If God had been sending preachers throughout history to every people group, then the world wouldn't have been in darkness but full of light. And a world full of light wouldn't have

crucified the Light of the world, “that light is come into the world” (Jhn 3:19), “I am the light of the world” (Jhn 9:5), “I am come a light into the world” (Jhn 12:46).

It’s a tremendously sobering thought that God allowed multitudes and multitudes of people throughout history to die with no hope of anything beyond their short life so that we would now have the hope of eternal life. If we would only realize and fully appreciate the precious opportunity given to us that many others never had. We now have the hope of eternal life: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life**” (Jhn 5:24); “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me **hath everlasting life**” (Jhn 6:47); “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that **ye have eternal life**” (1Jo 5:13). To have eternal life isn’t that we have some kind of higher quality of life that the rest of the world doesn’t have but that we now have the hope of eternal life that the rest of the world never had.

Conclusion

Mainstream Protestant theology teaches that man was created as an eternal, non-physical being living inside a body that can also live outside the body. Thus the true person is the non-physical and the body is only like a suit of flesh that can be put on or off. When Adam sinned, a kind of spiritual death came upon mankind so that the true non-physical being is spiritually dead even though very much still alive. Therefore, if man dies physically in this condition then the true non-physical person, though spiritually dead will continue living outside the body in a spiritual place of fire called hell. On the other hand, if man has been made spiritually alive or gains the quality of life called eternal life by making a confession of faith in Jesus Christ, then at death the non-physical being goes immediately to heaven. At the return of Christ, all of the non-physical beings in heaven also return and get put back into their bodies through resurrection. But at the end of the millennium all of the non-physical beings in hell get put back into their bodies through resurrection to be judged then cast physically into the permanent place of torment called the lake of fire.

What Scripture actually teaches is that man is a physical being formed from the ground and animated by the breath of God. The penalty enforced upon man’s sin is physical death which is returning to the ground from which he was taken. Resurrection from the ground is his only hope of eternal life. But in order to accomplish this, it was necessary that most of humanity was given no hope of eternal life so that only some of humanity could be given this hope. The Son of God came from heaven and became the last Adam to pay the price for our sins so that we can be raised to eternal life after the likeness of His resurrection. The righteous who take part in the first resurrection when Christ returns will regain access to the tree of life to live perpetually and never die again. But the unrighteous will be resurrected at the end of the millennium to face judgment, punishment, and death a second time then finally annihilated in the lake of fire.

Which is correct? Which makes more sense? Which harmonizes all of Scripture better? Which has fewer problems? Which better answers problematic questions? Which opens the door for selling indulgences, and which leaves man’s fate in God’s hands? Which glorifies a theological system, and which glorifies the teaching of Christ and His apostles?

False doctrine keeps some from coming to Christ and causes some to later fall away. One dear Christian man said that he put off coming to Christ for years because he didn’t want to face the truth that his deceased father was burning alive in hell day and night. If he had only known that that is not the truth! Many young

college students have been talked out of following Christ by ungodly professors that simply showed them the inconsistencies and absurdities of what they had been taught is “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jde 1:3). What an injustice we do to these young people by putting them in that precarious position. Muslims have a heyday maligning Christianity because of all the illogical problems in the doctrine of the Trinity.

These kinds of problems and many others are unnecessary if we would just be faithful to the truth taught by our Lord Jesus Christ. Why not be faithful to Him? Why not be willing to admit we’ve been wrong and submit to what He taught? Is it because we’re unwilling to suffer rejection, division, defamation, and persecution? Are we trying to make a name for ourselves, or are we trying to glorify His magnificent name into which we were immersed? Do we already have too much invested and committed into the path we’re currently taking that we’re unwilling to forsake it?

Abraham had already invested and committed himself to Ishmael being his heir until the Son of God appeared to him, informing him that his heir would come through his wife Sarah. And Abraham actually laughed at Him in His presence! **“Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!”** (Gen 17:17-18). He argued for Ishmael instead, but God wasn’t changing His plan, **“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him”** (Gen 17:19). He finally quit contending and agreed with Him in faithfulness, **“He staggered not [contended not] at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith [faithfulness], giving glory to God”** (Rom 4:20). The Lord’s side is the side that gets laughed at and mocked! Are we on the side that’s laughing, or on the side that’s being laughed at? Being faithful to Him gives glory to God, not to our selves.

Truth is always consistent. Inconsistencies and absurdities are red flags that something is either not true or else we’re just not understanding it correctly. Our goal should be to seek the knowledge of the truth which is in accord with godliness, “the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Tit 1:1), “their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness” (NIV). If we truly love Christ we will be on the side of truth, “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (Jhn 18:37), “All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true” (NLT), “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (NIV). And if we truly love people we will want them to know the truth, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). But if we stay faithful to a theological system hailed as being the historic position of the church, are we truly being faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ? Is our final authority what the church says or what the Head of the church said?

Truth itself causes divisions, “And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and **God divided the light from the darkness**” (Gen 1:4), “And the light shineth in darkness” (Jhn 1:5). Light dispelling the darkness forces us to take sides—to either affirm or deny the truth. Once we understand the truth, we must stand for it. Truth reveals which side we’re really on, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”