

What Happens When I Die? Where Do I Go When I Die?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE? WHERE DO I GO WHEN I DIE?

Before I can provide the specifics of what happens after we breathe our last and their order of occurrence, we need to discuss two views of the nature of (mankind) when God created Adam.

Tripartite (trichotomy) vs *Bipartite* (dichotomy).

I need to emphasize that there is disagreement on which of these two is more correct between Bible scholars, theologians, and those who thru many years of in-depth Bible study have qualified opinions. It is important for me to teach them to you, and also say they are not considered as part of essential doctrine nor related to salvation. Now let's ask and answer the question: *What do they mean?*

The easy part is what all of us know: *tri* means three and *bi* means two.

The *tripartite* view holds that we were created with three "parts" to our natures:

- **Body.** The *physical* being created by God from the dust of the earth.
- **Soul. Life,** the living elements within our bodies; includes our minds and senses.
- **Spirit.** The "*immaterial*" *part that connects us to God.* God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life. (Gen 2:7) No other creature has this. The spirit is the eternal part of our beings that goes to Heaven or hell immediately upon death. More on that later.

Many verses are used to argue this side of the discussion, but settling this or making it the focus of my message this

morning is not my purpose. We are going to answer the more specific question of the title. Following are verses used to support a tripartite view. We see that they use two distinct Greek words: *psuchē* for soul; and *pneuma* for spirit.

"(Mary) My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47)

Key Verse: *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."* 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

Jesus used *pneuma* (spirit) to describe what He yielded to the Father as He died.

"And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." Luke 23:46

However there are times when those words appear to be used interchangeably. That leads us to the *bipartite* position. It holds that *soul* and *spirit* are used interchangeably in multiple places in the Bible. That is true. Here are examples from Jesus' words:

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28

This is clearly reference to that part of our beings that is eternal and accountable at judgement.

In John's Gospel, we read these two verses that appear to use

both words in the same context.

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'?" John 12:27

"When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit..."
John 13: 21

However in the first verse, the tripartite could argue *soul* is the right word because it referred to Jesus' life (mind, breathing, heartbeats) being troubled at the thought of being crucified.

My personal study led me to align with the *tripartite* conclusion, but there are clear arguments for the *bipartite* ones. I am not dogmatic about it because ultimately once life departs from our bodies, they end up in the same place. More importantly, so do our soul/spirits. Now let's look more closely into the answers to our question, *"What Happens When We Die?"*

The Death of Christians: The Bible often uses this sweet thought concerning the death of *Christians* – We **"fall asleep"** *in the Lord*. Consider these verses:

"And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:60

"and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." 1 Corinthians 15: 17-18

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." 1 Thessalonians 4:13

The Separation of Body and Spirit/Soul

Our physical bodies. The first thing that happens when someone dies is the separation of physical bodies from our soul/spirit. Our bodies, whether buried, embalmed, or cremated will remain in that state until other events unfold which I will describe later.

Our Spirits. This is where the good news/bad news begins to play out. Let's begin with good news for those truly born-again in Christ. Our spirits go IMMEDIATELY to Heaven to be with Jesus and all the saints who have gone before. That includes OT and NT saints, as well as your friends and family who were saved. Some say there is a spiritual body associated with that, and even if there is, it is not your final glorified heavenly body. That comes later. Concerning the spirits of Christians going immediately to Heaven, consider these verses.

"For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street... then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12: 6-7

"And (Jesus) said to (the repentant thief of the cross), "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:43

"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand...As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Acts 7: 55,59

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect," Hebrews 12:22-23

The spirits of those who rejected Christ as Savior. As it is with Christians, the dead bodies of the lost remain dead in the ground or cremated. Now we come to the bad news about which all have been warned from the time of Christ and still goes on today. Those spirits go immediately to the first or "temporary hell", but not the final hell, the lake of fire. In the following parable

"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom (this meant Heaven to the Jews); and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades (the first Hell before the final judgement) he lifted up his eyes, being in torment...And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'" (from Luke 16:19-31)

These are the words of Jesus to the Apostle John as the book of Revelation draws to a close.

"Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Revelation 20: 14-15

As I close this message today, my prayer is that you never have to experience the most horrific of all. Your spirit never dies. You will spend eternity in one place or the other. Regardless of what some may teach you, the choice is yours: Reject Jesus Christ or Receive Him as your Savior. If the Holy Spirit brought you to this point, confess your sins and repent, believe/receive Him today. What are you waiting for?

For Christ's sake,

Walter