

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA
© ASK, September 2023 • All rights reserved • Number 9/23

Telephone: 503 292 4352
• Internet: www.askelm.com •
E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

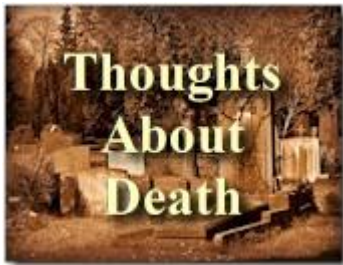
Thoughts About Death

by David Sielaff, September 2023

Read the August 23, 2023 Commentary: "[Ramona Martin's Death](#)"

And the September 1, 2023 Commentary: "[Life, Death, Life](#)"

Read the accompanying "[September 2023 Newsletter](#)"



This article is compiled from short writings on death over past years. Most are written by me, except for one short article at the end by Dr. Ernest Martin. These writings are about death: approaching death, what death is (and is not), and how God conquers death through Christ for your sake. Death will be the experience of every one of us alive today, except for a few believers alive at Christ's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18). With the death of Ramona Martin, President of ASK, on August 22, 2023, a review of biblical information about death is timely for you and for me. The writings

cover a range of topics from one pagan writer's common sense understanding about death to Dr. Martin's information of "The Death of Death."

Epicurus On Death

Commentary for September 16, 2007 — Sometimes Pagans Got Things Right

A few years ago, my wife and I attended the exhibition "Body Worlds 2" at the Museum of Natural History in Chicago. "Body Worlds 3" is currently being exhibited here in Portland at OMSI, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry through October 7. Body Worlds bills itself as "The Anatomical Exhibition of real human bodies." Parts of human cadavers are separated into components (muscles, sinews, veins, and arteries, etc.), the parts are "plasticized," which is a process of coating the parts with a translucent plastic, and presented in various displays showing movement. In a sense bodies are shown from the inside out.

Some may feel this is an improper use and display of the dead. However, defleshed skeletons of real people have been used for centuries for education in Western cultures. Educational use of human organs displayed in jars is common in university science laboratories around the world. Body Worlds is designed to educate.

The producers of "Body Worlds" wrote that volunteers donated their bodies to be used after their death. Perhaps our discomfort with such exhibitions is a cultural bias based on traditions not informed by the Bible. Embalming is mentioned several times without comment in the Bible. One is reminded of Joseph's body being

embalmed so his body could be transported and buried with his fathers (Genesis 50:26 and Exodus 13:19). Even Christ's body was anointed, and the women intended to further prepare His body with spices in some manner (Matthew 27:58–61, 28:1; Mark 15:45, 16:1; Luke 23:52–24:1; and John 19:38–42). Jesus' resurrection from the dead took place before the women could finish their various preparations of His body.

At the end of Body Worlds 2 in Chicago there was a text display with a short quotation from the writings of Epicurus, a long-haired Greek philosopher who taught in the period during and just after Alexander the Great (341–270 BC). He founded the Greek philosophical school of "[Epicureanism](#)," a materialistic philosophy. Epicurus wrote about death and dying in a letter:

“Accustom yourself to believing that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply the capacity for sensation, and death is the privation of all sentience; therefore, a correct understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life a limitless time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality.

For life has no terrors for him who has thoroughly understood that there are no terrors for him in ceasing to live. Foolish, therefore, is the man who says that he fears death, not because it will pain when it comes, but because it pains in the prospect. Whatever causes no annoyance when it is present, causes only a groundless pain in the expectation.

Death, therefore, **the most awful of evils**, is nothing to us, seeing that,

when we are, death is not come, and,

when death is come, we are not.

It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer.

But in the world, at one time men shun death as the greatest of all evils, and at another time choose it as a respite from the evils in life. The wise man does not deprecate life, nor does he fear the cessation of life. The thought of life is no offense to him, nor is the cessation of life regarded as an evil.

... Much worse is he who says that it were good not to be born, but when once one is born to pass quickly through the gates of Hades. For if he truly believes this, why does he not depart from life? It would be easy for him to do so once he were firmly convinced. If he speaks only in jest, his words are foolishness as those who hear him do not believe.”

• *Epicurus, [Letter to Menoeceus](#)*

Was Epicurus informed by Old Testament Scriptures? We cannot know, but I doubt it. He makes no reference to any authority, and his comments reflect observations of everyday life. Epicurus' observations are in accord with biblical statements (Job 14:7–12; Psalm 6:5, 30:9, 49:8–12, 88:10–12, 115:17; Ecclesiastes 2:15–16, 3:19–22, 9:5–6, 10; and Isaiah 26:14, 38:18) which indicate that in death there is no consciousness or existence until God returns us to life in a resurrection at some future time. Simply, the dead cease to exist.

One portion of the words of Epicurus (“**he who says that it were good not to be born**”) echo those of Job, Solomon (Ecclesiastes 6:3), and even Christ Himself in a different context (“**good were it for that man if he had never been born**,” Mark 14:21, referring to Himself). Epicurus is wrong when he says “**Foolish, therefore, is the man who says he fears death.**” Death is an enemy, and it is not surprising that we would fear our enemies. Our “**last enemy that shall be destroyed is death**” (1 Corinthians 15:26). King David admonishes us to have courage and to comfort ourselves in God's protections and God's sequel to death:

“**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:**
[Why?] **for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.**”

• *Psalm 23:4*

The apostle Paul, the author of the sermon of Hebrews, writes that death enslaves us for life, but Christ delivers us from the slavery of death and its power over us.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He [Christ] also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage [slavery].”

• *Hebrews 2:14–15*

Even though Epicurus understood important parts the true nature of death and the state of the dead (that they are dead, not immortal in soul or spirit, and not living in a disembodied existence), he did not know or teach about the sequel to death that will occur eventually for all children of Adam (who apparently he knew nothing about). All human beings will eventually become Children of God:

“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. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?’ [Paul quoted and combined Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14]

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

• *1 Corinthians 15:54–57*

The Body Worlds exhibitions celebrate the wonders of the human body and educate people about their bodies. Your body is a great and wondrous creation of God. In the resurrection we will be given a spiritual body even more marvelous, composed of flesh and bone (but not blood, Luke 24:39–40 and Ephesians 5:30) and energized by the Spirit of the Living God.

Instead of blood and lymph fluids moving through your body now, the Spirit of God without measure shall flow through your spiritual body. This is your future, and mine. As the King James Version poetically phrases it: **“Let every thing that has breath praise YHWH. Praise you YHWH!”** (Psalm 150:6).

David Sielaff

King David’s “Near Death” Experience

Commentary for February 1, 2008 — The Killer Threatened By Death

The [“February 2008 Newsletter”](#) also deals with the subject of King David and death. If King David did not respond to God correctly, God would kill him. He received a message that was a direct threat from YHWH Himself. See my article [“The Tomb of David and Psalm 30.”](#) The Tomb of David refers to the sepulcher that God “made” for David. Psalm 30 actually has a title to it: “A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David.” That “house of David” was the “Tomb of David.”¹

King David was familiar with death because he had dealt out death to others very often, usually on the battlefield. He was, to use a modern phrase, a cold-blooded killer. Perhaps he enjoyed killing his enemies. David was a man of blood, and he knew full well what it was to kill men (and probably women and children) in battles and conquests of cities. Such was the way of ancient warfare. His bloodiness was the reason God gave David for not allowing him to build the Temple. Twice King David told the reason God refused his strong desire to honor his God:

“But the word of YHWH came to me, saying, ‘You have shed blood abundantly, and have made great wars: you shall not build a house unto my name, because you have shed MUCH blood upon the earth in my sight.’”

• *1 Chronicles 22:8*

¹ The House of David does not refer to the Temple; that structure was built by Solomon.

“But God said unto me, ‘You shall not build a house for my name, [Why?] because you have been a man of war, and have shed blood.’”

• *1 Chronicles 28:3*

God would not have made these statements unless David was a very bloody man. All the people of Israel knew David had a reputation as a man-killer. Everyone knew this because of an incident spread abroad throughout Israel. The incident occurred during Absalom’s rebellious attempt to usurp the throne of Israel against David. As David and the armed escort protecting him were fleeing Jerusalem from Absalom and his army, a man named Shimei of the house of Saul (king before David) came up to David and his men. Shimei taunted and cursed David:

“... he [Shimei] came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed,

‘Come out, come out, you bloody man, and you man of Belial: YHWH has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned; and YHWH has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son: and, behold, you are taken in your mischief, because you are bloody man.’”

• *2 Samuel 16:5–8*

David Knew About Job’s Suffering

Besides David’s experience in killing and causing the deaths of others, David also knew about death from the book of Job.² Job thought that death would not be such a bad thing considering the painful suffering, and trauma and tragic losses Job has suffered — all allowed by God:

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down: he flees also as a shadow, and continues not. And do you open your eyes upon such a one, and bring me into judgment with you? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing [1] his days are determined, [2] the number of his months are with you, [3] you have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;

... But man dies, and wastes away: yea, man gives up the ghost [spirit], and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decays and dries up: So man lies down, and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised OUT OF THEIR SLEEP.

O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!

If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands.”

• *Job 14:1–5, 10–15*

Job later replied to his friend Bildad and made this declaration to the others that were listening:

“For I KNOW that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

• *Job 19:25–27*

A threat of death to David in Psalm 30 came from a surprising source — God Himself. YHWH was David’s God, Israel’s God. Up to the moment of the declaration of David’s death, YHWH had protected David and nurtured his rise to power as king of Israel. Yet suddenly, as David learned, God wanted him dead, and soon. This is ironic because King David, a man who had taken so many other lives, faced a quick death that was not

² The Book of Job was available to the people of Israel during this time. Job may be the oldest book in the Bible. It likely was composed before Genesis. (Job likely existed when the records of Genesis were compiled from much older documents).

only suddenly declared, but it was inevitable because God Himself declared it. It was inescapable.

David repented and did not die. He lived longer than he thought he would. In fact, David **“died in a good old age, full of days.”** He received a reprieve from God, who extended his life. The [“February 2008 Newsletter”](#) and article [“The Tomb of David and Psalm 30”](#) explain God’s threat to pronounce a death sentence upon David as told in 2 Samuel 7:18–29 and in Psalm 30. I wrote that article to expand the knowledge regarding the Tomb of David and examine new aspects of that topic. Eventually David approached death again. At that time David fully reconciled himself to his upcoming death, likely from natural causes. He gave his final words to Solomon and the assembled leaders of Israel.

“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, ‘I go the way of all the earth.’”

• 1 Kings 2:1–2

David had narrowly escaped death and accepted God’s will in an extremely threatening situation. David saw death from the recipient’s point of view. He knew what death would bring from the book of Job. Indeed, God was more merciful than David would have been to another man.

We can learn about dying from David’s example. We can learn how to respond to the approach of death by considering Job as well as David’s early threat of death, and his later death at age seventy.

David Sielaff

“Congratulations, You’re Walking Dirt”

Addendum by David Sielaff to Dr. Martin’s article [“Figures of Speech and Holy Scripture”](#)

When Scripture calls you, me, and all human beings “dirt,” is that a metaphor? Is that a figure of speech? Let us investigate this matter. First, let us look at what we are not, as considered by those who think they know, but do not know or acknowledge the truth of Scripture about death.³ Their understanding is outside of Scripture and has the perspective of the “natural man” that the apostle Paul talks about in First Corinthians:

“But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

• 1 Corinthians 2:14

God did not create the world out of “nothing.” All creation came out from God the Father Himself, through Christ as is clearly expressed in Colossians 1:15–20. See my Commentary [“Was the Creatio ex nihilo?”](#)

We Are Not “Star Stuff”

In his 1980s television series *Cosmos*, Astronomer Carl Sagan used to enthrall people by stating, **“We are star stuff.”**⁴ Sagan went even further and made a statement of faith: **“We are star stuff contemplating star stuff.”** Apparently Dr. Sagan believed in spontaneous generation. He did not believe in God and was widely known as an atheist.

Atheists and most evolutionists usually believe in two propositions. Both are false and require an impossible amount of faith: (1) that everything came from nothing and (2) that intelligence came from rock. Thus, they believe in “abiogenesis” which is the scientific term for “spontaneous generation.” They also believe there is no God. Astronomer Carl Sagan had another approach to the first proposition (1) above:

“In many cultures it is customary to answer that God created the universe out of nothing. But this is mere temporizing. If we wish courageously to pursue the question, we must, of course ask next where God comes from? And if we decide this to be unanswerable, why not save a

³ See my April 2020 Commentary, [“Death and the Threat of Death ... Are Shared Experiences.”](#) DWS

⁴ See the NASA website [“X-ray Star Stuff.”](#) DWS

step and conclude that the universe has always existed?"

• *Carl Sagan, Cosmos, p. 270*⁵

God expressed His opinion about people who think that way in Psalms 14:1 and 53:1. The apostle Paul elaborated on that theme in Romans chapter 1. Actually, you are not “star stuff.” You are dirt. You are “of the earth,” not “of the stars.” Lift your arm — dirt. Wiggle your nose — dirt. You ARE dirt.

That Is What We Are – Dirt!

Did you ever think that you are truly, “animated dirt”? More precisely you are “animated dust,” which is closer to what the Hebrew term *adam* means: “ground” or “earth.” Adam, the ancestor of us all, was made of dust [*aphar*] or dirt [*adam*]:

“And YHWH Elohim formed man [the man, *ha-adam*] of the dust [*aphar*] of the ground [earth, *ha-adamah*], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man [the man, *ha-adam*] became a living soul.”

• *Genesis 2:7*

“In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground [earth, *ha-adamah*]; for out of it were you taken for dust [*aphar*] you are, and unto dust [*aphar*] shall you return.”

• *Genesis 3:19*

“For he [YHWH] knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust [*aphar*]. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”

• *Psalms 103:14–16*

“Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust [*aphar*], which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever [permanently] without any regarding it.”

• *Job 4:18–20*

Certainly, this is poetic language. These are figurative expressions, but they are also true to fact. You are dust; you are animated dirt. We all are. God repeatedly says we are so. Kind of humbling isn’t it! At funerals it is common for people to say, **“ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”** While this is not a biblical quote, it accurately describes a true biblical concept.

“For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”

• *Ecclesiastes 3:19–20, KJV* [“dust” is *aphar* in both places]

Are You An Animated Tube?

New Age philosopher and theologian Alan Watts gives his insights into what human beings are, and he also concludes human beings have no purpose for existing:

“... living organisms, including people, are merely tubes which put things in at one end and let them out at the other, which both keeps them doing it and in the long run wears them out. So to keep the farce going, the tubes find ways of making new tubes, which also put things in at one end and let them out at the other. At the input end they even develop ganglia of nerves called brains, with eyes and ears, so that they can more easily scrounge around for things to swallow.

⁵ Quoting from Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos: The Book* (Ballantine Book, Random House Publishing Group, 1980). DWS

As and when they get enough to eat, they use up their surplus energy by wiggling in complicated patterns, making all sorts of noises by blowing air in and out of the input hole, and gathering together in groups to fight with other groups. In time, the tubes grow such an abundance of attached appliances that they are hardly recognizable as mere tubes, and they manage to do this in a staggering variety of forms.

There is a vague rule not to eat tubes of your own form, but in general there is serious competition as to who is going to be the top type of tube. All this seems marvelously futile, and yet, when you begin to think about it, it begins to be more marvelous than futile. Indeed, it seems extremely odd.”

• Alan Watts, [The Book](#), p. 10 (in the online PDF)⁶

There is some truth to this statement (outside of evolutionary nonsense), and in a way Watts addresses the wondrous nature of life by reducing the nature of life to a simple concept. In fact, some Bible passages seem to agree with this assessment. Job’s “friend” Bildad equated man to a worm (Job 25:6). David in his depression felt himself to be a worm: **“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people”** (Psalm 22:6). In these instances, Bildad and David were speaking figuratively but accurately.

Alan Watts’ description and understanding of human beings comes from a naturalistic and limited perspective. It presents the perspective of what the apostle Paul calls the natural man:

“But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

• 1 Corinthians 2:14

For all his worldly wisdom, throughout his book Alan Watts presents no purpose of life, and more importantly he does not acknowledge God’s role or purpose to man’s existence. We are a creation of God! God’s purpose is far greater than Watts can conceive in his natural mind. Without considering God and His purpose, there is no reason that human beings exist. That purpose can only be revealed from God to man.

You Are Literally a Miracle

As a created being you are truly a miracle. Every breath you take is a continuing miracle. Animated dirt you are! Yet you are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26–27). How does that work?⁷

Inanimate dust and dirt formed within your mother’s womb, and you become a living soul when you took that first breath of life and at the moment (and not before) you received the spirit of man. Both the breath and the spirit are from God. The result is that your human soul is established with that first breath.⁸ You did not exist before that time. God imagined you, He spoke, and you became a living soul, just as He did for Adam.

This “miracle of **YOU**” as animated dirt continues until you die, just as God told Adam. Read Genesis 3:19 above again: **“... unto dust shall you return.”** When you die, your soul dies as the dust returns to the ground, and the spirit returns to God. Deaths and births continue on the earth for other animated piles of dirt. Yes, there will come a time when the last person becomes a living soul, just as Adam was the first person. Each person is unique, as the Psalmist says:

⁶ Alan Watts, *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (Vintage Books, 1966), p. 10, online PDF. DWS

⁷ Asking this question has led some to conclude that God’s image in humanity cannot possibly include anything physical. God, after all, is Spirit and not dust or dirt. Yes, **“God is spirit”** (John 4:24, the indefinite article “a” in the King James Version is not indicated in the Greek). Everything about God is Spirit, including His body. Yes, God has a body. See my Commentary, [“God’s Body”](#) and Dr. Martin’s article, [“The Bodily Composition of God.”](#) At present, as you read this article, you are composed of dust, dirt, earth. That is why the simile of “image” is used to describe man in Genesis 1:26. God’s image will be full and complete when each human being receives his or her body composed of and energized by God’s Holy Spirit. See 1 Corinthians 15:44–49 quoted below. DWS

⁸ See my Commentary [“Abortions and Miracles”](#), the [“February 2005 Newsletter”](#) and Dr. Martin’s presentation [“Abortion and the Bible,”](#) as well as my Commentary [“What Does ‘Soulful’ Mean?”](#) In Dr. Martin’s book *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine* this subject is discussed in [“Chapter 13: Just What Are Human Beings?”](#) Finally, look at Dr. Martin’s article [“Salvation and the Biblical Doctrine of Deification.”](#) DWS

“You [God] hide your face, they are troubled: you take away their breath, THEY DIE, and return to their dust. You send forth your spirit, THEY ARE CREATED: and you renew the face of the earth.”

• *Psalm 104:29–30*

“Then shall [1] the dust return to the earth as it was: and [2] the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. ‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the preacher; ‘all is vanity.’”

• *Ecclesiastes 12:7–8*

In Genesis 18:27 Abraham said to God that **“I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, [I, who] which am but dust and ashes.”** Job in his distress and pain set upon him by God said, **“He has cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes”** (Job 30:19, see also Job 2:8, 42:6). Ash and dust are the same. The entire concept of **“sackcloth and ashes”**⁹ is a symbol of mourning that relates directly to the actual state a person’s body reaches after death.

We will receive another gift from God. Moments after our resurrection, almost immediately, we will receive a spiritual body unlike our natural body. We will no longer be animated dirt. We will have a spiritual body, composed of spirit “substance” totally energized by God’s Holy Spirit.

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam was made a living soul’; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

• *1 Corinthians 15:44–49*

This is figurative language only because the reality will happen in the future. It is sure. Those who grow up on farms understand these words better than you or I might because they are involved with sowing and raising. They understand dirt. You are dirt, and so am I. Farm people understand this concept. As Paul says, we are like Adam, **“of the earth, earthy.”**

You are dirt. Your body is the clay that God is using to help build a child of God. Once that spiritual mold of character is completed, the clay, the dirt will no longer be needed. Read about God as the Potter in Isaiah 45:9, 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1–11; and Potter for individuals in Romans 9:20–21. Clay, earth, dust. These figures (also all literal) are related. When you receive your spiritual body, the dirt will fall away! Read it yourself in 1 Corinthians 15:52–54.

This is not brain surgery folks. These are plain, straightforward biblical statements about the nature of man. The Bible says you are animated dirt. Indeed, you are so. Accept it. Be fascinated by it. You are destined to be much more than that. You were created as “dirt” in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). God will complete that image in you.

You are not and were never intended to be merely “star stuff,” but some day you will be “godly stuff” as a child of God. You have the Spirit of God now, which is an earnest, a down payment, for what you, me, and everyone will become. Then the figure of speech will be a reality.

David Sielaff

Death Is a Return

Commentary for July 15, 2017 — Differences between Christ’s Death, and Ours

A while back I read a commentary by A.E. Knoch on Acts 2:27,¹⁰ the verse where Peter talks about Jesus’

⁹ See Esther 4:1, 3; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:6; Matthew 11:21; and Luke 10:13. DWS

¹⁰ A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament* (Concordant Publishing Concern, 1968), Acts 2:27. DWS

resurrection: **“Because you will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you suffer [allow] your Holy One to see corruption.”** Knoch begins by writing, **“death is a return.”** I want to expand on his analysis. The key verse he used was from Ecclesiastes: **“Then shall the dust [soil] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”** (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The **“dust”** of the ground or **“soil”** (of which the body is composed) combined with the spirit forms the soul (soil + spirit = soul). Another way of explaining this fact is that the **“spirit of man”** energizes the **“soil”** to form the **“living soul”** each of which is unique. This is true for every human being, including the first man Adam. This is true for you.¹¹

Man has a unique type of soul (Genesis 2:7) composed of **“soil”** and a **“spirit of man”** (Job 34:14; Ecclesiastes 3:21; 1 Corinthians 2:11). The fact that the body returns to the dust, soil, or earth, is confirmed often in Scripture (Job 4:19, 34:14; Psalm 146:4). Note what Ecclesiastes 3:20 says: **“All go unto one place; all are of the dust [soil], and all turn to dust [soil] again.”**

Death will be a common experience of all human beings (except for a few “exceptions to the rule” Paul wrote of 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18). For the rest, all have died or will die, and the body returns to the dust and the spirit of man returns to God. Christ’s situation was different.

Differences Between Christ’s Experience And Our Future Experience Of Death

Recall what God said to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:19:

“In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground¹²; for out of it were you taken: for dust [soil] you are, and unto dust [soil] shall you return.”

When Jesus died, He ceased to exist, without consciousness. His spirit returned to His Father:

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost [spirit].”

• *Luke 23:46*

One difference. Jesus’ body did not return to the soil. His body did not begin the corruption process. The reality of His body’s lack of decay was confirmed by Peter on Pentecost day as recorded in Acts 2:27 (cited above), quoting King David’s prediction in Psalm 16:10. His body during the three days and nights in the tomb, did not begin to decay “unto the ground” (Genesis 3:19), unlike the dead bodies of Adam, Eve, and every one of their children.

Another difference. Jesus was raised with His same crucified body. His Spirit returned to Him from God when resurrected, but He probably (and I am guessing) had not yet received His spiritual body and put His blood before God in heaven (Hebrews 9:11–14). This was why He told Mary Magdalene not to touch Him.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Touch me not; for I am not YET ascended to my Father: but [you] go to my brethren [the disciples], and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.’”

• *John 20:17*

¹¹ Animals have souls similar in some respects to human beings (Numbers 16:22, 27:16; Acts 17:25, 28). Animal souls are also very different from human souls. Animal souls (Genesis 1:20–21, 24, 30, **“soul”** is *nephesh* in Hebrew [“living creature” in the King James Version]) are made up of “soil” and have an animal spirit which is different for each animal “kind.”

Animals do not have human souls because they do not have a human spirit (Job 12:10). Each body of each creature — human or animal — is specially formulated and “designed” to receive the spirit unique to its animal kind, or the spirit unique for the children of Adam. DWS

¹² The Hebrew word “ground” is the origin of the name *Adam*. See my Commentaries “Death and Life.” “Epicurus on Death” and my Addendum “Congratulations, You Are Walking Dirt” toward the end of Dr. Martin’s article “Figures of Speech and Holy Scripture.” DWS

Later Jesus told His disciples to touch Him (Luke 24:39–40). We will be resurrected with different mortal bodies (most bodies having turned to dust). Our individual consciousness will return. Almost instantly we will be given our spirit bodies (1 Corinthians 15:52–54).

In Resurrection, Each Body Is Unique

“But God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Corinthians 15:38). Paul explains how Christ’s spiritual body, and ours, will differ from Adam’s body of “dust” or soil. All Adam’s children will experience this change, and all will become God’s children:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead.

It is sown in corruption;	it is raised in incorruption:
It is sown in dishonor;	it is raised in glory:
it is sown in weakness;	it is raised in power:
It is sown a natural [soulish] body;	it is raised a spiritual body.

There is a natural [soulish] body, and there is a spiritual body.

And so it is written,

‘The first man Adam	was made a living soul’ [quoting Genesis 2:7];
the last Adam	was made a quickening spirit.’

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

The first man	is of the earth [soil], earthy [soilish]:
the second man	is the Lord from heaven.
As is the earthy,	such are they also that are earthy [soilish]: and
as is the heavenly,	such are they also that are heavenly.

And as

we have	borne the image of the earthy [soilish],
we shall also	bear the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.”

• **1 Corinthians 15:42–50, King James Version**

Yes, after our resurrection we will have the same kind of body Christ has now (1 John 3:1–3).

David Sielaff

Death and Life

Commentary for July 1, 2014 — Contrast in the Book of Romans

No epistle of the New Testament, and perhaps no book in all the Holy Scriptures, refers to dying, death, and the dead more than Paul’s epistle to the Romans. Death, dying, or the dead occurs some 69 times in Romans. Even when death is not mentioned, death is in the subtext of the rest of Paul’s message to the Romans. Note what the apostle Paul wrote about being conciliated to God, both by the death of God’s Son, and after His resurrection to life:

“For if, being enemies,

we were CONCILIATED [in the past] to God through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated [now, at this moment], we shall be saved [in the future] in His life.

Yet not only so, but we are glorying also in God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we now obtained the conciliation."

• *Romans 5:10–11, Concordant Literal Version*

The Greek word "CONCILIATED" is a better translation than "reconciled" (as in the King James Version). "**Conciliation**" is God's gracious one-way gift from Him to you, with no response necessary by you. "**Reconciliation**" is a 2-way relationship involving conciliation by each party. This is a subtle but an important distinction. Paul in his epistle to the Romans does not teach reconciliation. It is taught later in Ephesians 2:16 and Colossians 1:20–21. God's conciliation toward us is the same relationship as He has with His Son, Christ Jesus. Christ's life and resurrection guarantee our personal salvation (yours and mine), but our glory will not be realized until our resurrections occur at Christ's return.

This is the subject of my July 2014 article, "[The Exact Time of Christ's Return](#)." You will understand that article better if you read first my "[July 2014 Newsletter](#)." The article describes precisely when Christ's resurrection will occur FOR YOU. That article will comfort many who are ill, infirm, or aging. It discusses not only your own time of death and resurrection, but also the death and resurrection of all your loved ones who have died before you. Paul continues in Romans chapter 5:

"Therefore, even as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned.

... For if, by the offense of the one, the many died, much rather the grace of God and the gratuity [gift] in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds."

• *Romans 5:12, 15, Concordant Literal Version*

Now read, 2 Corinthians 5:18–20:

"Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us [Paul and his evangelism team] the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation.

For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated to God!'"

• *2 Corinthians 5:18–20, Concordant Literal Version*

"... those obtaining [1] the superabundance of grace and [2] the gratuity [gift] of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

• *Romans 5:17, Concordant Literal Version*

Yes, the grace of God and the gift in grace by the act of Jesus Christ "superabounds" to "the many." Jesus Christ was dead (not alive in a disembodied state), was resurrected, and He will die no more:

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God."

• *Romans 6:8–10, KJV*

Note carefully what verse 8 says. Although "**dead with Christ**" now as believers, in the future "**we shall also live WITH him**." We will not live with Him in death, we shall "**live WITH Him**" when we are alive. For us who are believers now, this will only occur when Christ returns.

The dead are not alive; any more than the living are not dead. Interestingly, no one says that those who are physically alive are dead. However, Paul does state that the living are dead **in their sins** (Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13). "**How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?**" (Romans 6:2). Now, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, we need to live righteously: "**If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit**" (Galatians 5:25, see also 1 Peter 4:6).

“Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness. Now if the spirit of Him [God the Father] Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also be vivifying your mortal bodies [why?] because of His spirit making its home in you.”

• *Romans 8:10–11, Concordant Literal Version*

Not only is death an important theme in Romans, but as you read above, our life after death is important to Paul. As believers, our judgment after death is already decided in our favor through Christ’s righteous acts. Our life **“in Christ”** is assured, as is that of every human being, which will eventually occur to glory **“in Christ.”** How then should we live now?

“For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”

• *Romans 14:7–9, KJV*

Note how Paul expresses himself at the end: **“that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”** Life and death are opposites. One cannot be alive while dead. One cannot be dead while alive, with two exceptions which are figures of speech: [1] figurative death (such as “dead to sin” or “dead in your sins,” and [2] figurative living but tending toward death (Genesis 2:17, 3:3–4).

David Sielaff

The Death of Death

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1979

Edited by David Sielaff, 2003, 2023



Listen to the Byte Show Interview on this article:
The Death of Death - [Listen](#) • [Download](#) • [MP3](#)
[More Byte Show Interviews...](#)

The mission of Jesus Christ has been grossly misunderstood by the majority of people in this world. They believe He came to offer a chance for salvation — a chance to escape an eternal torment or an eternal death. The truth is, he offered no such chances at all! If chances were offered which depended upon our works, then none of us would be saved. But Christ offered no chances. What he did was to secure a total and certain victory over all torment and death. This is what the Gospel of Christ is about.

The assignment that Christ accepted from God the Father was to secure a victory of salvation on behalf of mankind, and for all creatures in the universe. He embarked on a mission of triumph that had a certain outcome. His commission was designed to have complete success over all the forces of evil in the universe. And the message of the New Testament revelation was to show how Jesus Christ would accomplish that assigned task. He came to have an assured victory — a thorough conquest of all his enemies.

The Greatest Enemy

What was the supreme antagonist that must be conquered? Though it may appear strange to some, the chief enemy of God and man is not Satan the Devil and his demons. All scriptural revelation shows that Satan is under the domination of God and his wishes. There is no competition between God and Satan, because God is absolutely in control. But there is an enemy that God is against, and it is a powerful one.

From the Biblical point of view, death is the greatest enemy of all. But Christ has been victorious over death, and Christ will finally eliminate death completely. That enemy is not something animate or spiritual. It

is something far more encompassing. It is a state of affairs — a state of things which has had all mankind and all the universe in its clutches. That enemy is something that all of us are aware of and something that we see all around us. That enemy is **death!**

And what is the mission of Christ? It is to nullify that arch enemy of creation. And Christ has symbolically done it by His death and resurrection, but He will actually destroy it in a time yet future to us. **“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”** (1 Corinthians 15:26).

“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. O death, where is your sting? O grave [hades], where is your victory?’”

• 1 Corinthians 15:54–55

Death is to be **“swallowed up”** — it will be utterly consumed and destroyed — by the victory of Christ. It will no longer be a hurting “sting.” Even *hades* [the place of the dead — sometimes translated “hell”] will no longer have any victory. The time is soon coming when the final resurrection of the dead occurs. That resurrection will be so complete that even Death and Hades will no longer exist. Both are destined to be destroyed by the power of Christ. **“And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”** (Revelation 20:14).

The “second death” is a “death” — it is not an “eternal life” in some kind of burning fire. If the phrase really meant “eternal life” in hell fire, then “death” has no meaning. It would be the opposite! Yet the Bible means what it says. The “second death” signifies “death”! But the death of what? The Bible says the second death involves “Death and Hades.” It is literally “The Death of Death.”

The Death of Death

When death itself is destroyed, what does that mean? It shows that there will be no more death. It does not merely mean that there will be no more “dying.” Absolutely not! It shows far more than that. It signifies that the state of death itself will no longer exist. Death will no longer have anyone in its clutches. The state of death will experience no victory over anyone. All people will be brought back to life — a life in which death will no longer be in existence.

“All that the Father gives me shall come to me. ... And this is the Father’s will which sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”

• John 6:37, 39

But how many people of the world has the Father given to Christ for His possession and happiness? Every last person in the world! Those who have ever lived. Those who live now. And those who will ever live in the future. Jesus said, **“The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”** (John 6:51). The Father has given Christ everyone that lives in the world.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

• John 3:16–17

In the final analysis, the Father will not condemn the world, He will save the world when they repent of their sins and accept the sacrifice of Christ on their behalf.

“And he is the propitiation for our sins [the sins of present-day believers]: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of THE WHOLE WORLD.”

• 1 John 2:2

God’s forgiveness reaches out to embrace the totality of the world. The Father, through Christ, is recon-

ciling the entirety of the human race to Himself. He will do this by not condemning them in the ultimate sense. All trespasses against God and man will be forgiven by God.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world [the entire world] to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. ... For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

• **2 Corinthians 5:19, 21**

True enough, there will be retribution for the sins that humans commit. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for their ways (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God for judgment (Hebrews 10:31), and if people sin willfully, those sins will meet with a certain retribution, but all Christians are reckoned as “sanctified” regarding the ultimate matter of salvation — and this sanctification is for all time to come (Hebrews 10:14).

It was distressing for Paul to learn the great sinner at Corinth committed such lewdness that Paul reckoned him to be worse than the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 5:1–4). Paul awarded the man a certain and thorough judgment for his ways, but Paul acknowledged his ultimate salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

“Deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

• **1 Corinthians 5:5**

“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

• **1 Corinthians 3:15**

The fires of judgment can be used of God to deal with sin, yet it is Christ’s death on the tree of crucifixion that guarantees a salvation through grace — and grace is not dependent upon works, either good or bad (Romans 11:5–6). Grace is not license to sin (Jude 4), but it does mean that salvation has nothing to do with works (Ephesians 2:8) — whether those works are bad or good. Christians are created for good works (Ephesians 2:10), but not to gain salvation by them.

The Final Salvation

The last enemy that shall be destroyed in the exercise of God’s grace is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). This occurs when Death and Hades [hell — the place of the dead] are finally destroyed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). The Bible says that God wills all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Though in Adam all men have received condemnation and death (Romans 5:15), the free gift of grace afforded by Christ [the Second Adam] will grant an assured salvation to all.

“Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the last Adam — Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

• **Romans 5:18**

That promised “life” will come to all men when Christ finally secures His victory over Death and Hades. When Death and Hades are destroyed, nothing will remain except “Life” — a Life in Christ. God speed the day when “The Death of Death” will arrive. That is when the mission of Christ Jesus to this earth will have become complete. He will then be the absolute victor over all enemies of man and enemies of those in the universe. Death will soon be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26), and only life will remain for all. This is the promise of God through Christ. Truly, the teachings of Christianity are the hope of the world, and the assurance of a secure salvation in Christ. The death of death will be a future reality.

Ernest L. Martin, 1979

Edited by David Sielaff, January 2003, 2023