

DOCTRINE OF DEATHS

- I. Introduction and preliminary considerations.
 - A. The various words that are translated by the English term **death** have a wide variety of usages, which encompass at least eight distinct types of death.
 - B. As with other non-technical terms, the interpreter must first identify which form of death is in view in order to correctly understand and explain the Scriptures.
 - C. This principle is illustrated by the following passages, which can only be explained by correctly identifying which form of death is in view.
 1. Jn. 11:26: **everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.**
 2. Lk. 9:60: **allow the dead to bury their own dead.**
 3. Lk. 15:24: **for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again.**
 4. Eph. 5:14: **awake sleeper, and arise from the dead.**
 5. Rom. 7:9: **sin became alive, and I died.**
 - D. This doctrine is designed to identify the eight distinct types of death, which will provide the illumination necessary for the teacher to rightly divide the Word of truth. IITim. 2:15
- II. Vocabulary.
 - A. Hebrew vocabulary.
 1. מוּת (muth), to die, to bring death, kill, cause death, destroy, to come to a state of destruction.
 - a. מוּתָּה (maweth), death, that which causes death like disease or pestilence, the place or abode of the dead.
 - b. תִּמְתָּהּ (timuthah), 2X found in phrase **sons of death**; those doomed to die.
 2. The term דַּם (dam-blood) is used metaphorically for death or bloodshed. IISam. 16:8
 - B. Greek vocabulary.
 1. ἀπόλλυμι (apollumi), lit. to cause or experience destruction; the loss of life or well-being, to put to death.
 2. θανατώ (thanatoo), verb, to put to death, to cause to die, to render inoperative. The nuance of this family of words focuses on the lack of function, the lack of activity that results from death.
 - a. θάνατος (thanatos), noun, used of various forms of death; physical death, spiritual death, capital punishment, deadly disease, pestilence.
 - b. ἐπιθανάτιος (epithanatos), 1X, sentenced or doomed to death. ICor. 4:9
 - c. θανατηφόρος (thanatephoros), 1X, deadly, that which causes death. Jms. 3:8
 3. θνήσκω (thnesko), 9X, verb, used primarily of physical, once of spiritual death; this family of words focuses on that which is subject to death, that which is mortal.
 - a. θνητός (thnetos), 6X, adj., that which is subject to death, mortal.
 - b. ἀποθνήσκω (apothnesko), verb, 111X, used extensively for death of every type; to die, to be separated from someone or something.
 4. νεκρώ (nekroo), 3X, verb, to make dead, to deaden; this family deals with the lack of life, the lifeless state that is characteristic of death.

- a. νεκρός (nekros), noun, some who is dead, someone residing in a state of death, lacking life, powerless, useless.
- 5. τελευτάω (teleutao), verb, 1IX, lit. to finish, to bring to an end. It is used to denote that death is the final act, the end of life.
 - a. τελευτή (teleute), 1X, the end, death. Matt. 2:15
- 6. κοιμάω, (koimao), to put to sleep, to sleep; used metaphorically of physical death based on the principle of rest and inactivity.

III. Definition and description.

- A. Webster defines death as “*the cessation of all vital functions without the capability of resuscitation.*”
- B. He goes on to define death as the act or fact of dying; the cause or occasion that eventuates in death; the state of being dead.
- C. Death involves the reality of the loss of function or activity by virtue of a separation that brings about death.
- D. While death is the opposite of life, it should be noted that death does not always imply a loss of being; rather, it implies a loss of function associated with life.
- E. Physical death, the separation of the soul from the body and the resultant state of death, forms the basis by which we may understand the various types of death that are referenced in the Word of God.

IV. Physical death, separation of the soul from the body.

- A. Physical death became a reality with the sin of Adam in the garden. Gen. 2:17, 5:5
- B. For the believer and the unbeliever alike, physical death involves the dissolution of the bond between the soul and the physical body; the separation of the soul and body.
- C. In neither case does it involve the lack of existence since both the souls of the believer and unbeliever continue to consciously exist after physical death.
 - 1. For the unbeliever physical death involves:
 - a. Separation of the soul from the body, which actually produces the state of death.
 - d. Death comes to those that are in the midst of temporal pursuits and is quite unexpected for most. Lk. 12:16-20
 - e. The physical body decomposes and returns to its constituent elements, returning to the dust of the ground. Gen. 3:19; Job 34:15; Eccles. 3:20
 - f. The soul is transferred to Hades, where it remains until the Great White Throne judgment. Lk. 16:19ff
 - 1.) During the stay in Hades, the unbeliever is tormented in a temporary body, with no prospect for relief. Lk. 16:23
 - 2.) He has conscious memories of his past life. Lk. 16:25
 - 3.) He agonizes over the prospect of his loved ones joining him. Lk. 16:27-28
 - 4.) He is aware that the situation will not be changed. Lk. 16:26
 - 2. For the believer physical death involves:
 - a. Separation of the soul from the body, leaving the body of death behind. Rom. 7:24
 - b. An angelic escort to Paradise prior to the ascension of Jesus Christ, or an escort to the Third Heaven following the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lk. 16:22; IICor. 5:8
 - c. Conscious existence under the appropriate blessing and comfort in a temporary body. Lk. 16:25

- d. Should God's plan include physical death, the positive believer is provided with dying grace. II Tim. 4:7-8 *See doctrine of*
 - e. The negative or reversionistic believer, on the other hand, does not receive dying grace but dies the sin unto death. Prov. 5:22-23, 15:10; Jn. 15:6; Rom. 8:13; I Jn. 5:16
- D. Divine principles that regulate physical death.
- 1. God is the only one that has the right to end life; He is the ultimate cause, operating through His directive and permissive will. Job 34:14-15; Ps. 66:8-9; Acts 17:26; I Thess. 4:14
 - 2. Therefore, protection from death lies with God alone. Ps. 30:3, 118:18
 - 3. God determines the time and manner of physical death for everyone. Eccles. 3:1-2
 - 4. There is no second chance after death, (no reincarnation, no soul sleep, etc.) only the reality of judgment. Heb. 9:27
 - 5. The rapture generation is the exception to the reality of physical death. I Cor. 15:51; I Thess. 4:17
- E. Applications for the believer.
- 1. The positive believer is not to fear physical death. Ps. 23:4; Lk. 12:25; Rev. 2:10
 - 2. The positive, advancing believer is kept alive by the grace of God in order to allow him to advance to maturity and maximize spiritually. II Sam. 12:13; Matt. 6:25-33; Phil. 1:22-25
 - 3. Physical death ends all opportunities to produce Divine good; therefore, one must avail himself of opportunities now. Jn. 9:4
 - 4. The believer is not to conduct himself as his unbelieving counterpart does when he is confronted with the reality of physical death. I Thess. 4:13
 - 5. The adjusted believer recognizes that death is like sleep; it is a temporary state that will eventually be abolished. I Cor. 15:26; I Thess. 4:14; Rev. 21:4
- V. Sexual death, separation from the ability to procreate.
- A. Sexual death refers to the inability of people to have children; the lack of the ability to procreate normally.
 - B. Abraham and Sarah are the most prominent examples. Gen. 18:11; Rom. 4:19
 - C. Zecharias and Elizabeth are also examples. Lk. 1:7,18
 - D. Although these two couples were past the normal age for having children, the fact that they did so demonstrates that God can overrule this form of death via His sovereign will. Rom. 4:17-21
- VI. Spiritual death, the separation of the body from a human spirit.
- A. Spiritual death came into existence when the original sin of Adam was imputed to the flesh that produced it, forming a genetic alteration that demanded God's judgment. Rom. 5:12
 - B. When Adam's flesh was rendered sinful, God responded by judging that condition with the removal of his human spirit, rendering Adam spiritually dead.
 - C. Since Adam passes the genetic sin nature on to all his progeny, all are subjected to the same judgment and are born spiritually dead, lacking a human spirit, and in need of the new birth. Rom. 5:14,18; Jn. 3:3,7
 - D. Jesus Christ died spiritually in order to provide the potential for salvation, contingent simply upon belief in His person and work. Matt. 27:45-46; Col. 1:22; Heb. 2:9

- E. Spiritual death is conquered when one believes, God imputes eternal life, and regenerates the human spirit at the point of the new birth. Rom. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:5; IITim. 1:10; Tit. 3:5
 - F. If spiritual death is perpetuated throughout the lifetime of the unbeliever, he will endure the eternal, second death, the Lake of Fire.
 - G. This is the category of death to which Jesus Christ was referring when He instructed a potential follower to **Allow the dead** (the spiritually dead, unbelievers) **to bury their own dead;** (the physically dead). Lk. 9:59-60
- VII. The second death, the separation of the unbeliever from God forever.
- A. This category of death is reserved for unbelievers that perpetuate spiritual death throughout their lifetimes, refusing to accept the free offer of salvation through faith in Christ.
 - B. The second death is defined for us in the book of Revelation, and will be the lot of all that appear at the Great White Throne judgment. Rev. 20:11-15
 - C. This was the category of death to which Jesus Christ was referring when He stated, **everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.** Jn. 11:26
 - D. Once a person receives Christ, it is impossible for them to experience the second death, as seen in the use of the emphatic double negative οὐ μὴ (ou me—absolutely not).
- VIII. Temporal death, the believer separated from fellowship with God, residing under the rule of the OSN/STA.
- A. All believers continue to possess a functional and active sin nature following salvation; anyone that suggests otherwise is at odds with God and His word. IJn. 1:8,10
 - B. When the believer sins he capitulates control of his life to the STA, breaking fellowship with God and losing his **abiding** status. Jn. 6:56, 15:4-5; IJn. 3:24a
 - C. God's laws do not produce righteousness in us due to the weakness of the flesh and our tendency to capitulate to the lust pattern of the STA. Rom. 8:3; Heb. 12:1
 - D. In fact, exposure to the righteous standards of God only incites the lust pattern of the flesh to further sinning. Rom. 7:8-11
 - E. The Law does not provide for or effect spiritual recovery from temporal death; good works do not atone for sins; there is no effective penance one can perform to regain fellowship.
 - F. Therefore, temporal death may only be cancelled through the grace provision of rebound, which restores the believer to fellowship with God. IJn. 1:9
 - G. The believer that perpetuates this state of temporal death for an extended period of time enters reversionism, and will come under judgment up to and including the sin unto death. IJn. 5:16
 - H. Paul uses a couple of metaphors to describe temporal death.
 1. He likens it to becoming a prisoner of war, since the believer is neutralized in terms of the angelic conflict and can be used by the enemy. Rom. 7:23
 2. He refers to those under the STA as **sleepers** since they have become inactive. Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:14
- IX. Operational death refers to the believer that separates himself from applying Bible doctrine under the directive will of God.
- A. In one sense, this form of death can be the cause of temporal death (Jms. 4:17); on the other hand, operational death often involves the perpetuation of temporal death.

- B. This is illustrated by the parable of the prodigal son, who had perpetuated his temporal death for an extended period of time. Lk. 15:11-32
 - C. This form of death can become the lot of those who claim positive volition, have heard a lot of doctrine, but do not follow through with the appropriate applications. Jms. 2:17,20,26
 - D. In that regard, James calls this type of death **being a hearer only**. Jms. 1:22
 - E. In order to avoid temporal and operational death, one must not only isolate the sin nature, he must continue to walk in obedience and apply the commandments. IJn. 2:3-6
 - F. Since this is something that can happen to any believer, it should come as no surprise that this condition can affect an entire congregation. Rev. 3:1-2
 - G. The only method for recovery from this form of death involves focusing on the doctrine you have been taught (Rev. 3:3a), a change of mind (Rev. 3:3b), and renewed obedience.
 - H. One question each believer should ask regularly is **What have I done to apply doctrine in my personal life and toward others today?**
- X. Positional death refers to the believer's positional separation from the sin nature.
- A. This category of death may be the most difficult to grasp in that it demands an understanding of retroactive and current positional truth.
 - B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the ministry whereby the Holy Spirit enters the believer into union with Jesus Christ so that the believer shares the election and destiny of Christ. Gal.3:26-28.
 - C. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (identification with Christ) is the mechanic of retroactive positional truth (RAPT) and current positional truth (CPT).
 - 1. Current positional truth means that we share in all Christ is now and will share in His glorious future as well. Rom. 6:8; ICor. 15:22; Rev. 1:6
 - 2. Retroactive positional truth indicates that we have also been identified with Christ's history and positionally share in His death on the cross. Rom. 6:3,5; Gal. 2:20, 5:24; Col. 3:3
 - D. Retroactive positional truth is designed to break the tyranny of the STA and replace the power that it had in the life with the power of God the Holy Spirit. Rom. 6:6
 - 1. The tactical victory of Jesus Christ on the cross, by which He overcame sin and the sin nature breaks the power that the sin nature exercised over you.
 - 2. The Greek term *καταργέω* (katargeo) has the basic sense of that which is idle or useless; to deprive something of its strength, to render inoperative by replacing something with a superior force.
 - 3. The second purpose clause denotes the reality that the sin nature is no longer our master and we no longer have to serve it.
 - E. Therefore, positional death teaches that we can, at any time, break the rule of the STA simply by rebounding and applying doctrine.
- XI. Experiential death relates to the isolation of the STA in time.
- A. This area of death is related to the previous positional death, in that positional death carries with it the challenge to isolate the STA in Ph₂. Rom. 6:4,11; IPet. 2:24
 - B. Although the STA was crucified with Christ and rendered inoperative positionally, it does not give up the desire to rule the life experientially. Rom. 7:8,11,17,20,23
 - C. At the point of faith in Christ, the OSN was isolated positionally and was isolated experientially as the believer began to **abide** under the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jn. 6:56

- D. In fact, there are only two ways in which the believer can put to death the deeds of the flesh. Rom. 8:13
- E. The first involves resisting the advances of the sin nature as it promotes its lusts, attempting to deceive you into sinning. Rom. 7:11; Jms. 1:13-14
- F. In the event the believer capitulates to the sin nature and commits personal sin, the second method of putting the flesh to death is via rebound, which restores the filling of God the Holy Spirit. IJn. 1:9

XII. The deaths of Jesus Christ.

- A. It was prophesied in the Old Testament that Jesus would experience deaths plural. Isa.53:9
- B. This prophecy was fulfilled when He died spiritually on the cross and then died physically shortly following His spiritual death.
- C. Although both deaths involve a separation, we should be diligent to note the differences between the two deaths.
- D. His spiritual death occurred when His humanity was separated from fellowship with the Father during the hours between 12:00-3:00 PM. Matt. 27:45
- E. This fact was highlighted by His plaintive cry, which was addressed to the Father. Matt. 27:46
- F. It was during this time that God the Father poured out in His body sins of all men and extracted the appropriate punishment for those sins. IICor.5:21; IPet. 2:24
- G. His spiritual death is referred to in Scripture as the **blood of Christ** since it fulfilled the Old Testament types when an animal was slaughtered by spilling its blood. Heb. 9:11-14
- H. Physical death followed shortly, as the deity of God the Son dismissed the soul and spirit of His humanity. Jn. 19:30
- I. It must be emphasized that the sufferings inflicted by the cosmos, up to and including crucifixion, were not the sufferings that procured our salvation.
- J. Rather, it was His spiritual death on the cross, as He bore our sins, that effectively propitiated the Father and made eternal life a potential for all men. Rom. 3:25; IJn. 2:2