

What Happens When We Die?

Introduction

We need to understand death from YHWH's perspective. In Matt.22:23 Mashiach is reminding the Jewish leaders of YHWH's statement to Moshe (Deut.3:6) when He tells Moshe, He is the Elohim of the living not the dead saying He is the Elohim of Avraham, Isaac and Jacob who had died long ago. Yet when we look at the verse it is talking in the present tense and not the past tense,

And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by Elohim, saying, I am (not was) the Elohim of Abraham, and the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob? YHWH is not the Elohim of the dead, but of the living. (Matt.22:31-32).

When we end this life, it is not death in YHWH's eyes, it is merely a transition from one form of existence to another. When we depart from this world we are not finished, Scripture says everyone must stand in Mashiach Yahusha's court and face judgement – some to glory others to condemnation (Rom.14:10-12, 2Cor.5:10). Mashiach does not convene His court until the end of His millennial rule. So, the question is, what remains after we separate from this body and what is its immediate destination?

To answer this question, we must first appreciate how we are made and try to understand the terms spirit, soul, and body. Whilst it is easy to define what is the body: it is the flesh, bone, and sinew, it is less clear concerning the spirit and soul and their function. There are two arguments; firstly, that spirit and soul are distinct and separate and secondly is the view that spirit and soul are one and the same. Strangely, the advocates of each can quote Scripture in support of their argument. I do not, however, believe it is necessary to examine the ramifications of the arguments for or against separation of spirit and soul, because the information available tells us that, after physical death, the spirit and soul reside in different locations. This is impossible if they are synonymous. What we can say is that the soul and the spirit are the two immaterial parts of humanity. So let us try and discern the function of each.

Spirit

Firstly, it is not our spirit, it is that part of YHWH that He breathed into man, and it belongs to YHWH,

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto Elohim who gave it. (Eccl.12:7).

So, after death the spirit goes back to YHWH to whom it belongs. When we realise the function of the spirit this makes perfect sense.

The spirit is that immaterial part of our humanity that "connects" with YHWH who is spirit (John.4:24). It is that part of us that corresponds to YHWH and enables us to contact, fellowship with, and worship Him. In simple terms the spirit is the telephone connection to YHWH's throne but not everyone is connected. Scripture says, only believers are spiritually alive (1Cor.2:11, Heb.4:12), and unbelievers are spiritually dead (Eph.2:1-5, Col.2:13). John.3:6 says, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." When we accepted Mashiach and were 'born again' the telephone connection became live. Only through Mashiach is the connection switched on.

The spirit is the element of our humanity that gives us the ability to have an intimate relationship with YHWH.

Soul

The soul is basically our mind, our emotions, our will, and our character. It is our personality and defines our individuality. YHWH created us with these faculties so we can express Him. Consider how Mary praises YHWH in Luke.1:46-47,

And Mary said, My soul magnifies YHWH, And my spirit has rejoiced in Elohim my Saviour.

To magnify means to make great, to extol. YHWH's purpose in creating human beings with a spirit and a soul was that they would receive Him in their spirit and express Him through their soul, i.e., by our human behaviour, by living an obedient lifestyle.

Where Does the Soul Go Upon Corporal Death?

At physical death, we know that the body goes back to dust and spirit goes back to YHWH, but what happens to the soul? According to Scripture the soul goes to She'ol, both righteous and unrighteous souls. King David was aware that his soul would reside in She'ol

Let my prayer reach You. Incline Your ear to my shout. For my soul has had its fill of misfortunes, and my life approaches She'ol. I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit. I have become like a man bereft of strength – among the dead who are released; like the corpses lying in the grave, whom You remember no more, for they have been cut off by Your hand. (Ps.88:3-6).

The diviner visited by king Saul brought the prophet Samuel up from She'ol,

So, the king said to her, "Have no fear. What did you see?" The woman said to Shaul, "I see an angel rising from the earth." He said to her, "What does he look like?" She said, "An old man is rising, wearing a cloak." Shaul knew that it was Samuel, and he paid homage and prostrated himself. Then Samuel said to Shaul, "Why have you disturbed me and brought me up?" (1Sam.28:13-15).

For further evidence that all souls go to She'ol, we have the story of the rich man and Lazarus recited by Mashiach, both were in the same location but separated by a chasm. Enoch elaborates on this separation explaining how, not only the souls of the righteous are segregated from the souls of the unrighteous but how the souls of the unrighteous are further separated from the souls of sinners,

*⁹ Three separations have been made between the spirits * of the dead and thus have been the spirits of the righteous separated. ¹⁰ Namely by a Chasm, by water and by light above it. ¹¹ And in the same way likewise are sinners separated when they die and are buried in the earth (in She'ol) judgment not overtaking them in their lifetime. ¹² Here their souls are separated. Moreover, abundant is their suffering until the time of the great judgment... ¹³ And thus it has been from the beginning of the world. Thus, has there existed a separation between the souls of those who utter complaints, and of those who watch for their destruction, to slaughter them in the day of sinners. ¹⁴ A receptacle of this sort has been formed for souls of unrighteous men and of sinners, of those who have completed crime and associated with the impious, who they resemble.... (En.22).*

**Unfortunately, Enoch uses the terms spirit and soul synonymously which, as said above, is an error. Our spirit differs from our soul because our spirit is always pointed towards, and exists exclusively for YHWH, whereas our soul can be self-centred. The joy, comfort, and peace of YHWH's presence in our lives can only be experienced through the spirit.*

Enoch goes on to explain that the three separations mentioned are 1) separation between the righteous and unrighteous, 2) then the unrighteous are further separated from sinners, that is, from those who have committed crimes and associated with the impious. It is interesting that the unrighteous are separated from sinners because Scripture makes no such distinction. Indeed, 1John.3:4 says that sin is the transgression of the Torah and Rom.2:13 says only those who observe the Torah will be considered righteous. So, how are we to reconcile this apparent anomaly? In my view we can use the position of Christians for the explanation.

Christians, because they do not observe YHWH's Torah/law, do not satisfy the condition for righteousness (Rom.2:13). Yet according to Enoch Christians although unrighteous will be separated from sinners because they are not impious. Thus, insofar as She'ol is concerned, something distinguishes an unrighteous Christian from a sinner. What can this be? The answer is in the highlighted section of verse 14. Sinners are either criminals or the impious, that is, the ungodly, which insofar as the Scriptures are concerned includes all pagan faiths. Christians are unrighteous but they are not impious nor are they criminals, hence they are treated separately in She'ol. It all comes down to belief: according to James, belief without works is useless. But James is talking in terms of

salvation. However, it is belief in the Father and the Son that separates a Christian from an impious person. Hence belief does have a value - outside of salvation.

To summarise, there are three categories of souls in She'ol: righteous souls, unrighteous souls, and the souls of sinners and the impious. Each of these categories is treated differently and whilst Enoch explains that the souls of sinners and the like will remain in She'ol until judgment, nothing is said about the souls of the righteous. My understanding is that the souls of the righteous will receive new physical bodies, not immortal bodies, and be supernaturally transported back to a rejuvenated earth, to reign with Mashiach in the Land as a nation of priests for a millennium. The unrighteous souls will, I believe, also be given new bodies, but different from those of the righteous souls, and they also will be supernaturally transported back to earth. However, these unrighteous souls will live outside the Land where they will be taught YHWH's Torah and given a second opportunity to live a righteous lifestyle.

What About Infancy Death.

A question often asked is, what happens to babies who die, surely a baby is innocent, so where do babies go? From my perspective age is a concept of our physicality and restricted to our physical existence. It is the body that ages not the soul or the spirit. As said the soul goes to She'ol and I do not believe there is such a thing as young souls or old souls: in She'ol there is just souls. Furthermore, I believe the soul is eternal, immortal. I say this because of Mashiach's comment in Matt.10:28,

And do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the being. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both being and body in GēHinnom.

The death of the soul can only be via the one who created it – YHWH. YHWH is outside of time, Isa.46:10 says, He declares the end from the beginning. He knows how all things will end after all He wrote the script. Thus, He knows the future character of the newly born child, so He knows where that soul ultimately belongs. Scripture supports the concept of predestination,

Blessed be the Elohim and Father of our Master Yahusha HaMashiach, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Mashiach: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation (creation) of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestined us to the adoption of children by Yahusha HaMashiach to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.'

In my opinion there is no concept of age insofar as the soul is concerned.

But What Exactly Is She'ol.

She'ol (Heb. שְׁאוֹל) has been translated as grave, pit and underworld throughout the Tanakh. However, the Hebrew language has a separate term for grave, kevura (קְבוּרָה) which comes from the root word kavar (קָבַר) which means 'to bury.' Neither does the term She'ol (שְׁאוֹל) mean 'pit.' Hebrew uses the term bowr (בּוֹר) for pit which comes from the root word buwr (בּוּר) which means 'to bore into.' However, She'ol is described as located at the bottom of a pit in Isaiah,

Instead, you will be brought down to She'ol (שְׁאוֹל), to the bottom of the Pit (בּוֹר)! (Isa.14:15).

From this verse we can deduce that She'ol is below and not above. Another passage from Isaiah provides further evidence that She'ol has occupants, hence it cannot be the grave as some may conceive,

She'ol from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the sovereigns of the nations. All of them respond and say to you, 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your arrogance has been brought down to She'ol, and the sound of your stringed instruments; the maggot is spread under you, and worms over you.' How you have fallen from the heavens, O Lucifer son of the morning! You have been cut down to the ground, you who laid low the nations! (Isa.14:9-12)

This verse is referring to Lucifer, a.k.a. the devil and Revelation 20 tells us that the devil will be locked in the abyss, (def: a bottomless chasm) confirming She'ol is at the lower most depths.

One final word on She'ol. She'ol is often mistranslated 'hell' but hell is a completely Christian concept, from which comes the term hellfire, that was taken from the pagan belief of Hades. Hell is the translation of the Greek '*Geenna*' pronounced '*Gehenna*.'

Is There Any Remembrance of the Former Life After Corporal Death?

There is good reason to believe that what remains after the death of the body has no memory of the formal life. Referring to the period after He has dealt with this evil humanity with the outpouring of His wrath on earth, YHWH tells the prophet that what previously existed will not be remembered,

For look, I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to heart. (Isa.65:17).

The effect of YHWH's wrath will be extensive, affecting the whole of the terrestrial realm

*But the day of YHWH will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of Elohim, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? * (2Pet.3:10-12).*

* The context of 2Peter chapter 3 leaves no doubt that this passage refers to the end of the 'Sixth Day' and not the 'Seventh Day.'

Enoch also describes a world with a new topography resulting from YHWH's wrath which harmonizes with the words of the apostle, hence there is no point for the former life to be remembered. What is more the righteous souls would have difficulty finding peace knowing that the unrighteous members of their family, their loved ones, their children, had not made it so to speak and were suffering torment in She'ol. It will be a completely new beginning after YHWH's wrath, hence the verse in Isaiah should be understood in absolute terms. This brings us to Lazarus and the rich man story – is it fact or fiction. I believe this was a fable from Mashiach to teach how critical it is to get things right before physical death.

Communication With the Dead

Then there is the question of communication with the dead. Does YHWH allow the living to communicate with the spirits of the dead? The answer is an emphatic no,

There shall not be found among you anyone that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or one that practices sorcery, or an enchanter, or a witch, (Deut.18:10).

*And they (*Israel*) left all the commands of YHWH their Elohim, and made for themselves a moulded image, two calves, and made an Asherah (*pagan goddess*) and bowed themselves to all the host of the heavens, and served Ba'al, and caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, and practised divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of YHWH, to provoke Him. (2Kings.17:16-17).*

Mediums are sorcerers by another name and serve HaSatan. The spirits they communicate with are demonic spirits and it is the demon that is in control. HaSatan's desire to ensnare as many souls as he can, and it is a very dangerous practice to open dialogue with these demonic spirits.

YHWH does not allow any soul to be released from She'ol at the will of the living. Thus, mediums and those who profess an ability to communicate with the spirits of the dead are frauds and the séances they conduct are a deception from the devil. Job provides confirmation,

Like a cloud dissolving and disappearing so he who descends to the grave does not come up. He returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore. (Job.7:9-10).

But how do we explain the medium bringing up the prophet Samuel for king Saul? Samuel most certainly is not a demon. Saul had asked the medium to consult specifically with Samuel, he probably would not have listened to any other prophet. So, YHWH accommodated Saul because YHWH wanted Saul to know what was about to befall him. We must remember YHWH is the author of the Torah which He gave for our benefit. Whilst I believe YHWH will always follow Torah – **for our sake**, He is not bound by Torah, He is above the Torah. What is more everything: human, animal, mineral, vegetable, gaseous all is YHWH's creation. Every flower in the meadow, every pebble in the stream, every tree in the forest every light in the galaxy, everything the eye can see, all must give reverence and be obedient to YHWH. If YHWH wanted the deceased prophet to reappear before Saul, then His want will be. We must remember the rules of Torah were given specifically for man and consultation with the spiritual world is restricted for YHWH alone.

Out of Body Experiences (OBE)

Not having experienced an OBE I can say little about this phenomenon. However, having read that those following pagan religions also purport to have experienced an OBE, this phenomenon cannot be considered exclusive to Christians or to followers of the Scriptures. The following are accounts of OBEs from two people with pagan beliefs.

- A 30-year postgraduate, Hindu, married woman with a 5-month-old baby, with severe head injury was brought to emergency in Glasgow with Coma Scale Score of E1 V1 M2. She was operated for acute subdural hematoma of left side. She was on ventilator for 8 days and was unconscious for around two months. After this she made gradual recovery over 1 year. During this period of unconsciousness, she described that she was in a brilliant light in which she floated. She then went to 'heaven' where there was a pantheon of Gods with 'hierarchy'. There was the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva but even they were in hierarchy 'junior' to 'Om' an apparition of light. She could recall what had been earlier discussed between doctors about technical matters regarding ventilator, endotracheal tube, and tracheostomy. Though she was reluctant she was then 'sent back' by 'Om'. Over the next 7 years she has slowly forgotten most of her description, but her belief has persisted.
- A 22-year -old graduate, Hindu male suffering from peritonitis had an anaphylactic reaction leading to cardiac arrest for around 10 minutes. He was resuscitated and recovered from this period of unconsciousness in about 36 hours and from sepsis in about 3 weeks. During the unconscious period he described travelling in a tunnel of white light which he was rushing through. He felt a sense of absolute peace and calm during the arrest. He also had an out of body experience (OBE) when he observed with detachment from outside, the rush of medics to resuscitate him. After few months, he could not recall the details other than the light.

Not only do these reports bring into question who or what is behind OBEs, but also question the relativity of OBE's and challenge the theory that YHWH is behind these experiences. Another problem affecting relativity is the variation in what different people experience. Some experience little more than a fleeting feeling that body and mind have become separated, while others recount floating far from their physical body and traveling to other worldly spheres. Add to these the several different causes of OBE's and the subject becomes a can of worms. For example, OBE's can be induced by meditation, drugs, excessive G force (pilots have experienced OBE for this reason) and sensory overload. On the other hand, OBE's can occur during sleep, extreme physical exertion and of course a near death experience. However, being a temporary experience, an OBE is not an archetype of the situation consequent upon the final expiration of life, which is the subject of this article.

Some Bad Catholic Doctrines

Purgatory

It would be imprudent not to mention the Catholic 'Doctrine of Purgatory. Purgatory is a creation of the Catholic Church and has no support in Scripture. According to Papal theology, purgatory is a temporary traffic stop on the way to heaven where a penitent soul suffers temporal punishment, after which that soul is free to enter heaven.

The theology is that if a soul does not enter Purgatory, it will go straight to hell. The doctrine of Purgatory was a necessary consequence of 'absolution' another Catholic invention. Absolution is the process in which a Catholic sinner may obtain forgiveness from a priest for all ungodly acts, (thus Catholic sinners have no need of Mashiach's blood). But in accordance with Catholic theology the priest provides forgiveness only and so papal theology says that the penitent soul must still pay punishment for the sins committed, hence Papal Rome needed to invent a place where this punishment is metered out and that place is Purgatory. But the Vatican does provide a means of by-passing Purgatory via its system of 'merits and indulgences.'

'Treasury of Merits and Indulgences.'

Rome claims to have a treasury chest of merits which consists of the merits (works) of Mashiach, His apostles and others, specifically the virgin Mary. The principal behind this 'treasury of merits' is Scriptural, Matt.6:19-20, Col.1:24-25 can be considered two relevant scriptures. The problem is Rome claims exclusive access to these merits but the work of Mashiach and the apostles is for the benefit of all not just the Catholic Church. The following is what Rome alleges, the highlights are mine,

This treasury includes the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission in the unity of the 'Mystical Body.'

This treasure is neither wrapped up in a napkin nor hid in a field, but entrusted to Blessed Peter, the key bearer, and his successors *(the Popes according to Catholicism's theory of apostolic succession: another myth from of Papal Rome)* that they might, for just and reasonable causes, distribute it to the faithful in full or in partial remission of the temporal punishment *(in purgatory)* due to sin.

The Church, by the authorisation of Christ, *(complete myth)* and through the communion of saints, can draw from the one treasury of merit and satisfaction to reduce or remove the debt of temporal punishment for anyone united to the body through sanctifying grace. And that is what an indulgence is.

An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment *(in purgatory)* due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven *(by a priest)* which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church.

To put it plainly an indulgence is granted by the Catholic Church. The indulgence is in effect granting a sinner access to the so called 'treasury of merits' and his sins are either reduced or annulled through the works of Mashiach and the apostles. But there are conditions, access is only available to a Catholic sinner who fulfils the basic requirements: going to confession and receiving absolution from a priest, receiving holy communion, saying a prayer for the pope, and achieving "complete detachment from any inclination to sin. Because an indulgence will negate or annul the punishment arising from their sin, it avoids a soul going to purgatory. Only the Pope can authorise indulgences because he has the treasury of merits which is used to off-set the punishment due. Therefore, an indulgence depends upon the good grace of the Pope, in effect forgiveness of sins is no longer conditional on YHWH's grace but the grace of the Pope. But it gets worse, look at this publication supported by Papal Rome,

Indulgences granted by Pope Francis for World Youth Day

As part of a greater effort the pope will use social media to connect with Catholics worldwide the pope will start relieving punishment for your sins via social media. According to the Vatican's Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary publication, pope Francis will be giving 'plenary indulgences' which is a special act that is said to reduce time in purgatory – to his twitter followers. The pope typically offers indulgences to those who see him in person but for the first time this year, it will extend to virtual visits too. (<http://mashable.com/2013/07/16/pope-forgives-sins-twitter>)

Rome now offers salvation electronically via twitter!!

Resurrection

Although the resurrection of the dead may be considered a tangential issue to the subject of this article, I felt it would be opportune to clarify some misconceptions concerning resurrection and have therefore added the following information.

Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Elohim. And those having heard shall live. For as the Father possesses life in Himself, so He gave also to the Son to possess life in Himself, and He has given Him authority also to do judgment, because He is the Son of Adam. Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil matters, to a resurrection of judgment. (John 5:25-29).

We have just said that there is no knowledge in the grave so how can whatever is in the grave acknowledge YHWH's command to come out? There are two points of note in this passage; firstly, YHWH is the Creator and He has not lost His power to create or recreate. Nothing is impossible for YHWH. YHWH can put life back into the grave if He so wishes. This happened at the death/resurrection of Mashiach (Matt.27:52-53) but this was an isolated case to emphasize who had been executed. Secondly and more relative, I believe Mashiach is talking metaphorically. In my view, when Mashiach says "*all in the tombs shall hear His voice*" it is a metaphor for all who have died. Look at what is said in Revelation,

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to their works. (Rev.20:12).

The verse says the dead were judged, that is, all dead, whether buried or not. At the time of judgement, at the end of the millennium, all the dead are resurrected and will stand before Mashiach, in His court (Rom.14:10). But does this mean resurrection of flesh and blood? I do not see the point in a resurrection of this kind. Let us consider sinners why would YHWH restore their bodies just to destroy them. In the case of the righteous the apostle says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom (1Cor.15:50). My understanding is that resurrection in the context of the end times means resurrection of all souls from She'ol. Every single soul, from Adam onwards, will appear before Mashiach but it is at the end of the millennial rule of Mashiach that this resurrection takes place.

Conclusion

As said in the introduction YHWH does not consider our physical death a serious matter. The death of this body is not the end as far as YHWH is concerned, it is merely the transformation from one life form to another that is, from the physical to the spiritual. In YHWH's eyes our physical death is not death, it is not the end. When we consider corporal/physical death from YHWH's perspective it is easier to understand how He can allow human catastrophes to happen: the truth is, they are not catastrophes in His eyes.