

May 5, 2021

The Shadow of Death

As we continue in our study of **Psalm 23:1-6**, we come to verse 4. So far, we have seen God's protection, God's provision, and God's restoration. This week we come to God's comfort. The phrase "shadow of death" is found twenty times in Scripture, ten times in the book of Job. Satan's attacks led to great physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual suffering in the life of Job. He was in a very dark place. Read **Job 10:20-22**. Take time this week to do a search and read each of the twenty references that include the "shadow of death." You will find that many of these verses include references to light and darkness.

Death is a topic that many people are afraid to discuss or think about, yet the Bible teaches that death is as much a part of life as birth itself. Every person who is born will one day die. Hebrews 9:27 says "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Apart from the return of Jesus Christ and the rapture of the church, we must all face an appointed hour of death. Death creates fear in the heart of many because they are uncertain about what happens after death. This is a result of a lack of understanding about what the Bible teaches about death. Death is not an ending, but simply a separation.

There are three deaths mentioned in the Bible. The first, is physical death. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and spirit. When a person dies physically, the soul and spirit enter eternity either in heaven with the Lord or in hell and the body is laid to rest awaiting the day of resurrection. In **John 5:24-29**, Jesus spoke of two resurrections, the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation. The first resurrection, the resurrection of life, takes place at the rapture as recorded in **I Corinthians 15:51-54** and **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**. At the rapture, Jesus Christ will return in the clouds. The bodies of those who have died as believers in Christ, will be resurrected and transformed into a glorified body to be reunited with the soul and spirit that will return with Christ. Believers in Christ who are living will be caught up into the air with them, being immediately transformed into a glorious body, and all will spend eternity with Christ in heaven.

The second resurrection, the resurrection of damnation, takes place at the great white throne judgment recorded in **Revelation 20:11-15**. At the great white throne judgment, the bodies of those who have died without Christ will be resurrected from death and reunited with the soul and spirit from hell (verse 14), to be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. The damned are condemned because their names are not written in the book of life. They were never born again into God's family (Read **John 3**). In **Revelation 21:27** we read that those who enter heaven are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The determining factor concerning one's eternal destination is whether or not their name is written in the book of life. Is your name written in the book of life? If you are saved and have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ, then your name is written in the book of life. If you have never asked Jesus Christ to save you, then your name is not written in the book of life and you are in danger of eternal damnation. Read **Romans 10:9-10,13** to see how one is saved.

The second death is spiritual death. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul and spirit

from God. In **Genesis 2:17**, God warned Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Disobedience would result in death. Of course, Adam and Eve sinned and ate of the forbidden fruit, thereby ushering death into the world, **Romans 5:12** and **Romans 6:23**. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, physical death did not happen immediately. The process of death began to work, which eventually led to physical death, but spiritual death was immediate. When God came walking in the garden, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Sin had broken their fellowship with God, creating a separation from God. Every human being born since Adam, apart for the Lord Jesus Christ, has been born with a sin nature, inherited from their father. Jesus Christ did not have a sin nature, because He did not have an earthly father. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Apart from the rapture, physical death is inevitable. We will all die, but spiritual death can be overcome through faith in Jesus Christ. When a person is born again in Christ, they are given the gift of eternal life and are passed from death into life. At that moment, their name is written in the book of life and they are assured a home in heaven.

The third death is eternal death. It is the separation of the body, soul, and spirit from God in the lake of fire for all eternity. We read about it in Revelation 20:14 where it is called “the second death.” If a person dies physically, while still dead spiritually, they will face eternal death. Eternal death is permanent. The only way to avoid eternal death is to be saved while still alive physically.

Knowing that death is not an ending, but only a separation, and knowing that there is hope in Christ beyond the grave, as believers we have a sure hope and therefore can be comforted, even in the face of a certain physical death. Before we go any further, take some time this week to meditate upon your own eternal soul. Have you been born again by faith in Christ? Consider **Matthew 16:26** and **Mark 8:36-37** and make sure your salvation. There is no hope and therefore no comfort to those who die without Christ. It is the most important decision you will ever make.