THE INTERMEDIATE STATE BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

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to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:6

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What happens when a person dies, and exactly where is that person? This study on "The Intermediate State Between Death and Resurrection" will be discussed in five key parts.

I. THE MEANING

The first part is the meaning. "What is meant by the intermediate state?" The basic meaning of the intermediate state is the state of existence between death and resurrection.

There are three different states in the life of man. Whether they are believers or unbelievers, they will experience three different states, but not the same destiny. The first state of man is from birth to death; the second state of man is from death to resurrection; and the third state of man is from resurrection to eternity.

The intermediate state is concerned with that second state of man: from death to resurrection. So what is meant by the intermediate state is the state of existence between death and resurrection.

II. THE STATE OF THE BELIEVER

The second part of this study has to do with believers. "What is their state between death and resurrection?" As far as the believers are concerned, the souls of the believers at their deaths are made perfect in holiness and they immediately pass into glory; their bodies, still united to the Messiah, rest in their graves until the resurrection. So that is basically what the believer experiences upon death and in the intermediate state between death and resurrection. At the point when he dies, the immaterial part of the believer is made perfect in holiness and passes immediately into glory, into God's presence in Heaven.

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The bodies are buried in the ground somewhere, but these bodies are still united to the Messiah, so they are merely resting in death in their graves until the resurrection. As far as his immaterial part of the believer is concerned, upon death his spirit or soul has perfect freedom from sin and suffering, and has great exultation and blessedness.

The Bible does give us some descriptions of what the intermediate state is like between death and resurrection for the soul of the believer.

A. A State Far Better

One passage is Philippians 1:23-24: *But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake.*

In this passage, one is clearly told that the state of the soul after death is *very far better* than its condition while it is *in the flesh*. A change for the better takes place immediately after death. Upon death, while the material part of man, the body, stays behind, the immaterial part of man, all that pertains to the spirit and soul, enters into God's presence and is in an exulted position, *a far better* position than is found while the immaterial part of man was residing in his body.

B. A State of Rest

The intermediate state is also described as a state of rest according to two passages. Those who have already died, now exist in a state of rest.

The first passage is Revelation 6:9-11: *And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.*

A second passage emphasizing their state of rest is Revelation 14:13: *And I heard the voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.*

C. A State of Consciousness

There is another passage, which details the intermediate state on what life is like for the believer who has died, and that is Revelation 7:16-17: *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

These two verses spell out five things about what life is like in the intermediate state for the believer. All of these are negative things that lead to positives: first, no hunger; secondly, no thirst; thirdly, no

sunstroke; fourthly, no heat; and fifth, no tears. The believer, at this time, is in a state of complete rest; he has no wants, he has no physical infirmities whatsoever. That is what life is like when a believer dies.

One thing that should be made clear is that all the Scriptures that describe the soul of the believer upon death show him to be in a state of consciousness; upon death, the believer's immaterial part is totally conscious.

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III. THE STATE OF THE UNBELIEVER

The third part of this study concerning the intermediate state is the state of the unbeliever. "What is the state of the unbeliever like?" It is quite the reverse of what the state of the believer is like. There are three main passages that describe the unbeliever in the intermediate state.

A. A State of Torment

The first passage is Luke 16:19-31, which is the story of the *rich man* and *Lazarus*. Sometimes this is called "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus," but that is a manmade title; the Bible does not say that it is a parable. Parables do not have personal names like *Lazarus* and *Abraham*. On the contrary, this is a story that Yeshua (Jesus) tells, and it is treated as a true story, not merely as a parable.

In the story of the *rich man* and *Lazarus*, not only is Lazarus in a state of rest and full consciousness, the *rich man* is also in a state of consciousness, but he is in torment. So the state of the unbeliever's soul between death and resurrection is a state of torment.

B. A State of Confinement

A second passage is found in I Peter 3:19, which describes these unsaved spirits as being in prison: *in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.*
The picture is that, since they are in Hell, they are imprisoned; they are in a state of confinement.

C. A State of Punishment

The third passage is II Peter 2:9, which describes the unbeliever's soul as being under punishment until the day of judgment: *the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.*
The picture here is that the unbeliever is suffering in Hell; he is confined in Hell. He is under punishment until the day of the Great White Throne Judgement when he will be resurrected, then he will suffer something even worse than death and Hell, and that is the Lake of Fire.

D. Deductions

So from these three passages, three things can be deduced about the

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intermediate state of the unbeliever: first, he is in a state of torment; secondly, he is in a state of confinement; and, thirdly, he is in this state of torment and confinement until the Great White Throne Judgment.

In all the passages that describe unbelievers in the intermediate state, they are also always shown to be in a state of consciousness. The rich man in Hell was conscious; he was able to carry on a conversation; he was able to feel things emotionally, feel things psychologically, and feel things physically. Unbelievers are always viewed as being in a state of consciousness.

So the immaterial part of the believer and the unbeliever are in a state of consciousness after death even though they are in two different places. While the believer is in Heaven in the presence of God, the unbeliever is in Hell being tormented, but the torment will become greater after the second resurrection, the resurrection of unbelievers only.

IV. THE INTERMEDIATE BODY

The fourth part of this study on the intermediate state has to do with the intermediate body. "What is the intermediate body, if any, that the believer has between death and resurrection?" Because this is a serious issue that needs to be discussed, the question of the intermediate body will be covered in five parts.

A. The Issue

"What is the issue when the intermediate body is discussed?" The issue is this: upon death, does the soul remain disembodied until the resurrection or is an intermediate body given to the soul until the resurrection?

B. The Key Passage

The second thing concerning the intermediate body is the key passage, found in II Corinthians 5:1-10: *For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.*

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This is the key passage concerning the existence or non existence of the intermediate body. This passage will be discussed in three parts: analysis, deduction, and conclusion.

1. Analysis

Verse 1 states that if the believer's *house* of his *tabernacle be dissolved* if his body is dissolved by death, he has another *building from God, a house* that is *not made with hands*, that is eternal, and is *in the heavens.*

In verse 2, he points out that in our present body we groan. While believers are in this present body, they are *longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven.*

Verse 3 states: *if so be that being clothed* the believer will *not be found naked*. The implication here is that the believer is naked without his body during the intermediate state.

In verse 4, he states: *indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan.*
The believer is burdened in this body because of the body's weaknesses. Now, the believer is not longing to be unclothed, but rather what the believer is longing for is to be clothed upon.

What the believer is longing to be clothed with is spelled out in the next line: *what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.*
What Paul wrote here is a summary of his statements made in I Corinthians 15:50-58, where he emphasized that, at some point, at the resurrection, mortality must put on immortality. So, what the believer wants to be clothed with is immortality and once the believer puts on immortality, *what is mortal* will indeed *be swallowed up.*

Then in verse 5, he points out who the Maker of all this is: *Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God.*
God is the One who is working in the believers to give them a body that eventually will be characterized by immortality. Temporarily, He has given the believer *the earnest of the Spirit*. The Spirit is an "earnest payment," a down payment or a reservation payment. The fact that the believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit is the guarantee that a day will come when the believer's mortal body will put on immortality.

Verse 6 states that this reason, knowing that the believer has the Holy Spirit as the evidence of a down payment, should give them *good courage*. For as long as the believer is living in his mortal body, this automatically means that the believer is *absent from the Lord.*

The believer is not absent spiritually, of course, but he is absent physically because verse 7 states that, in this life, the believer walks *by faith, not by sight*. Only when the believer goes into Heaven will he have *sight* as well as *faith*.

So in verse 8, he tells the believer again to be of *good courage*. While one

must recognize that as long as one is in this mortal body he is absent from the Lord, one should always be willing to give up one's life, one's mortal body, to be *at home with the Lord*. Here is a clear verse, which says purely and simply that upon absence from the body, upon death, the believer is in God's presence.

In verse 9, he goes on to state: *Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing to him.*
So knowing what the believer is now, knowing what the future holds, and knowing that the believer has the earnest of the Holy Spirit, the believer's life should be conducted consistently with the aim of being *well-pleasing* to the Lord.

In verse 10, he concludes this discussion by pointing out that once all believers get into Heaven with their immortal bodies they will *all* have to be *made manifest before the judgement-seat of Christ*, described in I Corinthians 3:10-15. The purpose for this judgment is the receiving of rewards or not receiving rewards *that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad*. While the believer's works have nothing to do with his salvation, he is saved by grace, apart from works, nevertheless works do determine the believer's rewards, and that in turn, determines the believer's degree of authority in the Kingdom.

2. Deductions

From the above analysis, five deductions can be drawn. First, the question here is this: "Is he speaking of an intermediate body, or is he speaking of the resurrection body? Which body does this passage really speak about?" Those who believe that there will be an intermediate body use this passage to prove it. But the evidence shows this to be the resurrection body.

Secondly, according to verse 1, this body is described as being *eternal* and the *eternal* body cannot be applied to an intermediate body, which is temporary. Since he calls this body the *eternal* one, it is better to see this as speaking of the resurrection body, not as some intermediate body.

Thirdly, if this were an intermediate body, what would happen to this intermediate body at the resurrection? If the body of verse 1 is an intermediate body, and since it is called an *eternal* body, what would happen to it since it could not disappear? What would happen to it in the resurrection? So again, it is better to see this passage as speaking of the resurrection body, not the intermediate body.

Fourthly, verses 3-4 do imply that there will be a temporary period of nakedness for the soul until it is clothed with the resurrection body. The implication is that, in the intermediate state, there is no intermediate body. The believer is unclothed; he is naked; he has no body until he receives his resurrection body.

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The fifth deduction in verse 10 seems to connect the body topic with *the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ*, by virtue of its timing, happens after the Rapture, which is when the resurrection occurs. So by virtue of its timing, it would appear to be dealing with the resurrection body, not some intermediate body.

3. Conclusions

The conclusions can be stated in two simple points. First, this passage does not teach the existence of an intermediate body. Secondly, the body it deals with is the resurrection body.

C. The Question

The question is this: "Can a disembodied spirit function without some kind of a body?" Some people want to immediately say, "No, a disembodied spirit cannot function without some kind of a body." It is this presupposition that causes some people to believe and to teach the existence of an intermediate body. But does the Bible really teach that a disembodied spirit cannot function without some kind of a body?

There are two passages of Scripture that talk about things, which exist in spirit-form, but do not have a body as we think of it. For example John 4:24 states: *God is a Spirit* and the Spirit is likened to wind in John 3:8. Wind does not have any specific shape, form or body and yet the wind is able to function. So in John 4:24, *God is a Spirit* and He is able to function without a body. Keep in mind that for all eternity past the Second Person of the Trinity was also without a body; He took on a body only as of the Incarnation. Neither the Father nor the Spirit have a body; they are spirit beings and they are able to function apart from a body. Furthermore, Hebrews 1:14 states that the angels are spirit beings and they function without a body.

So to the question, "Can a disembodied spirit function without some kind of body?" the answer is, "Yes, a disembodied spirit can function without a body." One should not presuppose that it cannot and therefore have to conclude that there will have to be some kind of an intermediate body when the Bible nowhere speaks of the existence of such a body. Again, the teaching that such a body exists is based upon a presupposition that a disembodied spirit cannot function without some kind of a body. This is simply not true.

D. The Description

"If what has been stated previously is true, what is the state of those who have died?" Wherever the intermediate state of the dead is described, they are always seen as soul spirits without bodies.

For example in I Samuel 28:12-19, Samuel appears in the form of *a god*, meaning in the form of a spirit (v. 13). So the spirit of Samuel came up from *Sheol*, and Samuel came up in the form of a spirit. According to verse 14, when Samuel appeared as a spirit, he looked

like he did when he had died. This shows that, in the intermediate state, the soul spirit has the same appearance as the body and yet there was no body there. The body of Samuel had died and it was still dead; Samuel was not resurrected from the dead at that point. Rather, it was his soul spirit, the immaterial part of Samuel, that was brought up from *Sheol*. "What did Samuel look like?" At that point, Samuel looked the same as when he had died because King Saul was able to recognize him. If Samuel had a totally different intermediate body, Saul would not have recognized him. So Samuel appeared and looked the same as he did when he had died, showing that the soul spirit has the same appearance as the body in the intermediate state, but there is no intermediate body in some "glorified" state.

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A second passage is Luke 16:19-31, which is the story of *the rich man* and *Lazarus* in their deaths. In neither case, not with *Lazarus, the rich man*, nor even when *Abraham* appears in that story, is there any mention of an intermediate body for *Lazarus*, for *Abraham* or for *the rich man.* So, neither in Abraham's bosom nor in Hell was there any intermediate body. But in that passage, it is noted that they appear in death just as they appeared in life. So again, the immaterial part of man looks like the material part of man, but it is a soul spirit; it has no intermediate body that is mentioned.

Another evidence of the intermediate state of the dead being described as always seeming as soul spirits without bodies is in the story of the Transfiguration (Mat. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30-31). In the Transfiguration, there were two people who had come and gone before the time of Yeshua: Moses and Elijah. The one we are concerned about in particular is Moses because, of the three men, he is the only one who had died. Jesus had not yet died; He was in His mortal body. In the case of Elijah, he was in his immortal body because Elijah never died; he was raptured into Heaven, having undergone the same type of experience that living saints will undergo at the time of the Rapture of the Church. So Moses is the only one of those three who had died, yet there is nothing stated about Moses' having any kind of intermediate body. All that is stated in these three passages is that they appeared with the transfigured Messiah in glory, but it says nothing more. There is no hint in any way that there was an intermediate body of Moses. What one is told is that they do share in the Shechinah Glory, but it is not necessary to have an intermediate body to share in the Shechinah Glory.

One more passage that deals with the intermediate state where no bodies are mentioned is Revelation 6:9-11: *And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were,*

should have fulfilled their course.
In this passage, John sees souls in Heaven and, while souls are mentioned, bodies are not mentioned.

So from these examples, it should be clear that whenever the intermediate state of the dead is described they are always seen as soul spirits without bodies.

E. The Conclusion
The conclusion is very simple, there is no intermediate body! The body that the believer has is the only body he will ever have. When the body that is now mortal dies, the soul spirit goes into Heaven and is unclothed, it is naked with no intermediate body present until the body is resurrected and then the soul spirit is clothed again.

V. THE FALSE TEACHINGS

The fifth part of this study on the intermediate state is to discuss two major false views or false teachings on the topic of the intermediate state. The first false view is that which is known as the Second Probation, and the second major false view is known as Soul-sleeping.

A. The Second Probation Theory
The first false view is the doctrine of the second probation and will be discussed in three areas.

1. The Two Forms of the Second Probation Theory
There are two different forms of the theory of second probation.

a. Limited Second Probation
The first form is the Limited Second Probation Theory that believes that the second probation is limited to those who die in infancy or die without hearing the gospel. Those who die as infants will have a second chance to be saved later, and those who die without hearing the gospel will have a second chance to be saved later after death.

b. Unlimited Second Probation
There is a second form of the Second Probation Theory and that is the Unlimited Second Probation Theory that teaches that all will ultimately be saved. There are three types of the unlimited second probation.

(1) Universalism
One type is known as Universalism. Universalism teaches that all are eventually saved without the necessity of after life repentance. A day will come when everybody is going to be saved in the second probationary period, even if they do not repent, do not believe, or do not exercise faith.

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(2) **Restorationism**

A second form of the Second Probation Theory is known as Restorationism. Restorationism teaches that all are saved because of a second chance to hear the gospel after death and a subsequent repentance after death. Both universalism and restorationism teach that all are going to be saved eventually; hence, it is unlimited. The difference between the two views is that universalism teaches that repentance will not be necessary for all to be saved; restorationism teaches repentance will be necessary for all to be saved, but they go on to point out that, all will repent at some time after death.

(3) **Universal Reconciliation**

There is a third type of unlimited second probation known as Universal Reconciliation. This view teaches that, after a long period of existence in the Lake of Fire, all are going to be reconciled back to God; all are going to be saved, including Satan.

The Comparison: In comparing the three views of Unlimited Second Probation, all three believe that everybody is going to be saved eventually. There are just some minor differences between the them. Universalism teaches that all will be saved without repentance. Restorationism teaches all are going to be saved, but they are all going to repent first; repentance is necessary. Neither Universalism nor Restorationism teaches that there will be a period of temporary punishment. Universal Reconciliation teaches that there will be a temporary period of punishment in the Lake of Fire, then all are going to be reconciled, including Satan.

2. Arguments in Favor of the Second Probation Theory

The second area of this discussion of the Second Probation Theory is to list arguments used in favor of it: "What arguments do these teachers use to try to prove the truth of a second probation?" Basically, they point to five passages of Scripture.

The first is Acts 3:21, which speaks of *the times of restoration of all things.*

The second passage is I Corinthians 15:27-28, which states all things, will be subjected to the Son.

The third passage is Colossians 1:20, which states that God will *reconcile all things unto himself,* both in *the earth and in the heavens.*

The fourth passage is Philippians 2:9-10, which teaches that *every knee* [shall] *bow.*

The fifth passage is a combination of I Peter 3:19 with 4:6, which speaks about the gospel being *preached...to the dead*. Since it is *preached...to the dead*, then it must mean a second probation.

These are the five arguments that are used to try to teach a second probation and they all use these same verses whether they hold to the limited or to one of the three forms of unlimited probation.

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3. Arguments Against the Second Probation Theory

"What are the arguments that show that this teaching of second probation is simply not true?" There are five arguments against this view.

a. The Scriptures Used

First, the Scriptures used in favor of it will be dealt with.

The first passage was Acts 3:21, but in this verse the *all things* is limited to that which was spoken by the prophets, and that did not include any kind of universalism, limited or unlimited.

The second passage was I Corinthians 15:27-28, but in this passage the *all things* "being subject to the Son" does not mean the salvation of all, but only that even the unsaved will be in subjection to Him. This is what that this passage is teaching.

The third passage is Colossians 1:20, but in this verse reconciliation does not mean all are saved. In fact, the very term "reconciliation" only means that all are savable. They still must believe and if they die without believing there is no further opportunity.

The fourth passage is Philippians 2:9-10, but again this passage only shows the subjection of all to God; it does not mean the salvation of all. Even unbelievers will some day be in subjection to Him.

Fifth, as to their comparison of I Peter 3:19 with 4:6, they are ignoring the fact that these are two different contexts. In 3:19, the Greek word for "preaching" here is not the word that means, "to preach the gospel," "to evangelize" or "to get people saved." It is a different word, *keirusso* that simply means, "to proclaim." A proclamation not to save them, but a proclamation to condemn them. Furthermore, it was made to one group of spirits, those who were disobedient in Noah's day. In 4:6, the Greek wording means, that the Gospel had been preached to those while they were still alive but had now passed away. So none of these five passages that are used actually teach the doctrine of a second probation.

b. The Fixed State of the Unbelieving Dead

The second argument to those who teach this doctrine is that the unbelieving dead are seen in a fixed state that cannot be altered. For example:

Matthew 13:41- 42 states that they are cast *into a furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.*

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Matthew 22:13 states that they *cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing teeth.*

Matthew 24:51 states that it is a place of *weeping and the gnashing of teeth.*

Matthew 25:30 states: in *outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.*

Luke 16:19-31 points out that *the rich man* could not pass from his place in Hell to *Lazarus* in *Abraham's bosom*; there was no crossing the line, and no future opportunity to do so.

John 8:21 and 24 states that unless one believes, he will die in his sins and there is no possibility of belief after dying in sin.

II Peter 2:4 states that the unbelievers are committed *to pits of darkness to be reserved unto judgment* of the Great White Throne.

II Peter 2:9 says that *the unrighteous* are kept under judgment until *the day of judgment.*

Jude 7 states that they are *suffering the punishment of eternal fire.*

And Jude 13 states that *the blackness of darkness* has *been reserved for ever.*

All these passages show that the unbelieving dead are seen as being in a fixed state, which cannot be altered.

c. The Basis of the Final Judgment

The third argument is to point out that the final judgment is based on deeds done in the flesh and not on what happens in the intermediate state (Mat. 7:22-23; 10:32-33; 25:31-46; Lk. 12:46-48; II Cor. 5:9-10; Gal. 6:7-8; II Thes. 1:7-10).

d. The Final Decision Made in this Life

The fourth argument is that, according to Scripture, the final decision is made in this life (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 9:27).

e. The Contradiction to Scripture

The fifth argument is that any form of universalism is directly contrary to Scripture (Mat. 25:46; Jn. 5:29; Rev. 20:11-15).

B. Soul Sleeping

The second and more popular false view is known as "soul-sleeping." The meaning of soul sleeping is that upon death the soul, the immaterial part of man, goes into unconscious sleep and the person who dies remains totally unconscious in body and soul until the resurrection. This false teaching of soul-sleeping will be discussed in two main parts.

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1. Arguments in Favor of Soul-Sleeping

There are three main arguments that those who believe in soul-sleeping use to defend their position.

a. The Dead Viewed as Sleeping

The first one is to refer to passages of Scripture that speak of the dead as "sleeping." Since there are passages of Scripture that describe the dead as sleeping, they conclude from these passages that it is the soul that sleeps.

In the Old Testament, this is found in Psalm 13:3 and Daniel 12:2. In the New Testament: Matthew 9:24; 27:52; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52; John 11:11-14; Acts 7:60; 13:36; I Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20, 51; I Thessalonians 4:13-14; and II Peter 3:4. These verses speak of the dead as sleeping; therefore, some teach from these passages that the soul sleeps.

b. The Dead Viewed in an Unconscious State

A second argument that they like to use is to point to verses, which speak of the dead as being in "a state of unconsciousness," therefore, the soul sleeps in an unconscious state until the resurrection. The passages they use are all in the Old Testament.

Psalm 6:5: *in death there is no remembrance.*
Psalm 30:9: *when I go down to the pit? Shall I praise you?*
Psalm 115:17: *The dead do not praise Jehovah, they go down in silence.*
Psalm 146:4 states that the *thoughts perish* at death.
Ecclesiastes 9:5-6: *the dead know not anything,* nor have the emotions of *love or hatred or envy.*
Ecclesiastes 9:10 states that there is *no work, ... device, ... nor wisdom, in Sheol.*
And Isaiah 38:18-19: *Sheol cannot praise you*, the dead *cannot celebrate you.*
These verses appear to speak of the dead as being in a state of unconsciousness, and that is the second reason some teach the doctrine of soul-sleeping.

c. The Determination of Eternal Destiny

The third argument is that the eternal destiny is determined only at the final judgment, not upon death. The Scriptures they use to try to prove that point are: Matthew 7:22-23; 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; II Corinthians 5:10; and Revelation 20:11-15. On the basis of these verses, they teach that eternal destiny is determined only at final judgment, not at death. This is also used as evidence of unconscious soul-sleeping upon death until the resurrection.

2. Arguments Against Soul-sleeping

"If their view is not biblical, how does one respond to these specific arguments?" There are seven arguments against soul-sleeping..

NOTES

a. Concerning the Term Sleep

The first argument concerns the term "sleep" when it is used of death. Whenever the Bible speaks of death in the sense of sleep, it is always used of the physical body and not the soul, because the appearance of a sleeping body and a dead body look very much the same. So when the Bible speaks of sleep in the sense of death, it is only used of the body, not the soul.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that whenever the Bible uses the term "sleep" in reference to death, uniquely, it is never used of unbelievers. It is a term used only of believers, which shows God's viewpoint of the death of a believer. From God's perspective, the death of a believer is a temporary suspension of physical activity. For example, in physical sleep, there is a temporary suspension of physical activity until one wakes up, but there is no suspension of the activity of the mind, the soul spirit, and all the subconscious continuing to operate. That is the way the Bible speaks of the believer. When he dies, it is viewed as sleeping in that it is a temporary suspension of physical activity until the believer wakes up in the resurrection, but there is no suspension of soul spirit activity.

The word "sleep" in reference to death is used only of the physical body and it is only used of believers to show what God's viewpoint is concerning the death of a believer.

b. Concerning Consciousness After Death

The second argument that can be used against the teaching of soul-sleeping is that the Bible clearly shows that men are conscious after death. There are clear passages of Scripture that speak of the dead as being in a state of consciousness. Three passages speak of the Transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; and Luke 9:28-36. One of those men, Moses, had died and yet Moses is conscious even though he had died. In Luke 16:19-31, the story of *the rich man* and *Lazarus*, it is obvious that the rich man is conscious, Lazarus is conscious, and *Abraham* is conscious even though they are all dead. Two are recently dead and one has been long dead. Indeed, their physical bodies are asleep but not their souls.

c. Concerning the Existence of Angels

The third argument that can be used in response to those who teach soul-sleeping is that the existence of angels shows that spirits can live and function apart from bodies. One of the reasons why people teach that soul-sleeping must be true is because they believe that disembodied spirits cannot function without a body. That is why some teach the existence of an intermediate body and others teach soul-sleeping. However, the existence of angels shows that spirit beings can and do live and function apart from bodies (Heb. 1:14).

d. Concerning the Term Resurrection

The fourth argument that could be used in response to those who

teach soul-sleeping is that the term "resurrection" applies only to bodies, never to souls. One will never read of a soul being resurrected from physical death (Mat. 27:52).

e. Concerning the Meaning of Death

The fifth argument is that the very meaning of death is that the believer enters immediately into God's presence. This is the clear teaching of Scripture, that upon death, the believer enters the presence of God (Acts 7:59; Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:6-8; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17).

f. Concerning the Language of Appearance

The sixth argument that can be used in response to the teaching of soul-sleeping is that the passage which speaks in terms of the dead being in a state of unconsciousness is not dealing with the soul being unconscious as such. Rather, some of these passages that are used of the unconscious state are merely the language of appearance. They are in reference to the body. But the issue is not the body, the issue is the soul. Some of these passages deal merely with the inability of the dead to continue the processes that were normal while living on the earth, since the body can no longer function.

As for the Ecclesiastes passages, they record the conclusions of human philosophy and not the teaching of the Word of God. So even the passages, which they use to try to show that men are unconscious after death, do not teach soul sleeping as such.

g. Concerning the Determination of Destiny

The seventh argument that should be pointed out is that the destiny determined at the final judgment has to do only with the degree of punishment and not with the fact of punishment, present or future. There is present suffering for the soul with the worst to come after the final judgment. Now in Hell, only the soul is suffering, but later in the Lake of Fire, there will be suffering of both the soul and body. The verses that are used to try to prove that final determination is made only at the final judgement, not at death, too often confuse the various types of punishment. The issue of salvation is determined upon death; the final judgement determines only the degree of punishment. So like second probation, soul-sleeping is not the teaching of the Word of God.✡

NOTES

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:
MBS101 and 107.