

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide

THE CURSE OF DEATH

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

—Genesis 2:17

In the beginning, God created the wonderful Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to enjoy and in which to commune with Him. The Lord God placed the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden (Genesis 2:9). As long as Adam and Eve ate of the tree of life, their health and vitality were preserved. They were created with living, immortal souls, and God made provision for them to physically live forever. However, God commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for disobedience was death. God made mankind free moral agents and gave them the power of choice which is necessary for the power to love.

Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the enemy and ate of the forbidden tree. When they committed this sin or transgression, their eyes were opened to the reality of good and evil (Genesis 3:6-7). This knowledge forever stole from mankind the innocence in which they had originally been created. Before disobedience, Adam and Eve were in a condition of innocence and spiritual purity.

God was true to His word as He is today and will be in the future. God’s pronouncement of death

in the garden was fulfilled. What kind of death resulted? The curse of death was twofold in nature—spiritual and physical.

Spiritual death occurred and there was a separation between God and man. God is a holy God and can not be in harmony with that which is unholy. The spiritual communion and relationship that existed between God and man was broken because of sin. The soul of man was corrupted with the knowledge of good and evil which was propagated through Adam’s fall. Children still today never have to be taught to do wrong as they are naturally inclined to sin. King David spoke of this in Psalms 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” David was expressing and acknowledging the sinful nature that he had from the beginning. This principle is often referred to as “original sin.” It refers to the propensity and inclination to sin that every individual brings into the world at birth.

There have been many religious controversies and divisions over the cause and/or transference of this sinful nature that began in the Garden of Eden and has passed to succeeding generations. At the end of every discussion and debate, the truth-seeking individual must acknowledge the reality of Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The tendency

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“The curse of death was twofold in nature—spiritual and physical.”

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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and inclination of unredeemed man is to the sinful things of the flesh. Through the blood of Jesus and the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, man can be restored to a relationship with God. While the capacity to sin still exists because of the power of choice, the inclination of redeemed man is to righteousness.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). The immediate death that Adam and Eve suffered was of a spiritual nature. Without forgiveness and cleansing, the soul of man is eternally separated



“The same curse of death had not only spiritual ramifications but also physical ones.”

from God in a spiritual death. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). The same curse of death had not only spiritual ramifications but also physical ones. While the soul of man was immortal, God pronounced that “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19). This was not God’s original plan, but after Adam’s sin, “He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24). From the moment Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and stopped eating of the tree of life, their physical bodies ceased to be rejuvenated and their bodies began to deteriorate. The longevity of the fleshly body seems to have been dependent upon eating of the tree of life. Its properties sustained the body and preserved it from decaying. From the time of Adam’s sin, man’s physical, earthly life has been limited in years.

The curse of sin was death both spiritual and physical. “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Spiritual death and physical death were together a result of Adam’s sin and it passed down to all people. Spiritual death is the separation or alienation of the soul from God because of unrighteousness. Physical death, cessation of the activity and functioning of the physical body, came as a result of the fall. The pronouncement of death was one, but the consequences were twofold and far-reaching. ■

The *Gospel Truth* is a quarterly periodical published in the interest of the Church of God for instruction and encouragement in the truths of the Bible. Visit us online at www.thegospeltruth.org and subscribe to the email notification list to receive current publications. The *Gospel Truth* is printed in many countries for local distribution and is supported by freewill offerings. A tax receipt will be sent upon request. Image used from Good News Productions International and College Press Publishing.

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Editorial



For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
—1 Corinthians 15:21

Death came upon mankind both spiritually and physically because of Adam's sin; but praise God, through Jesus Christ, death was conquered. Mortality came by Adam, but immortality came by Christ. Sin and death no longer have power over mankind because the curse was broken through the death and resurrection of our Lord.

The Gospel Truth this quarter deals with the theology of the first and second death and the first and second resurrection. I have prayed, studied, and researched much into these topics. There are many doctrines relating to these subjects that are clearly false, as they contradict the simple teachings of Christ. Even in researching past writings from Church of God brethren on the subject, I found a diversity of thought on some of the precise definitions and meanings. Some of the brethren purported that the first death was the physical death while others taught that it was the spiritual death that occurred in the Garden of Eden. Both of these teachings are compatible with the general tenor and teaching of the scripture.

I have come to the conclusion and am at peace spiritually and intellectually through the Word that the "First Death" is a result of the singular pronouncement of God as the penalty for disobedience. The nature of that ONE pronouncement was BOTH physical and spiritual. Christ rectified that one curse, which was in two parts, by the first and second resurrection.

I am inspired and enlightened by the scriptures shared in this issue. My prayer is that every reader will be challenged to be spiritually resurrected through Christ and to be warned of the final and second pronouncement of death yet to come for the unbeliever at the judgement. Thank God that hell hath no power over those who have been spiritually resurrected.

Michael W. Smith

July 2019



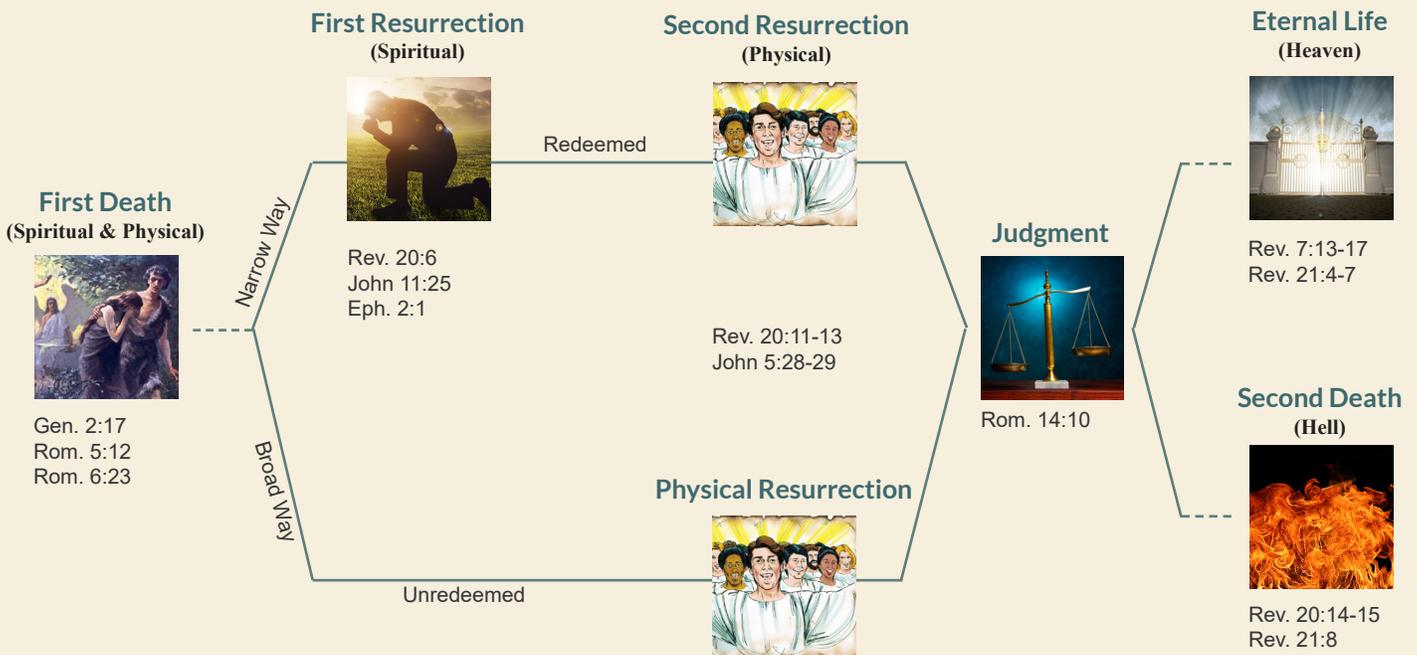
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1st & 2nd Death and 1st & 2nd Resurrection



Bible Study Guide

Subject: First and Second Death & Resurrection

Scripture Reading: *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.* —Revelation 20:6a

Summary: Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden brought the curse of death upon mankind. This death, the first death, was both physical and spiritual. Jesus Christ came to this world that through His death and resurrection mankind would have an antidote to the twofold consequence of sin. The first resurrection is the spiritual resurrection that occurs through salvation and the second resurrection is the literal, physical resurrection that will occur at the end of time. While there is a remedy for the first death, for those that do not accept Christ and partake of the spiritual resurrection, there will be no remedy for the curse of the final and second death which is eternal damnation in hell.



I. Consequence of Sin in the Garden of Eden

- A. Genesis 2:9 Two special trees in the Garden of Eden.
- B. Genesis 2:16-17 Benefits and consequences of the two trees.

II. A Twofold Death

- A. Romans 5:12 Death is a consequence of Adam's sin.
- B. Genesis 3:19 Physical death.
- C. Genesis 3:22, 24 Adam kept from the tree of life.
- D. Romans 6:23 Wages of sin is death.
- E. Genesis 3:6-7 Innocence lost through sin.
- F. Psalms 51:5 Depravity of man.
- G. Isaiah 59:2 Iniquity separates from God.

III. Spiritual Death & Spiritual Resurrection

- A. Luke 15:24 Prodigal son.
- B. John 5:24-25 Passed from death unto life.
- C. Ephesians 2:1, 5-6 Those dead in sin were quickened.
- D. Romans 5:8-21 Death by Adam. Salvation through Christ.
- E. John 11:25-26 Life through Christ.

IV. Physical Death & Physical Resurrection

- A. John 5:28-29 Resurrection from the dead.
- B. 1 Corinthians 15:26 Death is the last enemy.
- C. 1 Corinthians 15:42-57 Physical resurrection.

V. The Second Death

- A. Revelation 20:12-15 Second death is eternal damnation.
- B. Matthew 22:13 Weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- C. Luke 16:23-24 Hell is a place of torment.
- D. Mark 9:43-44 The fire will never be quenched.

VI. Partakers in the Second Death

- A. Revelation 21:8 The unrighteous.
- B. Revelation 2:11 The overcomer will not be hurt.
- C. Revelation 20:6 No power over the saved.

Conclusion

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. —Revelation 2:11

DEATH & RESURRECTION

Death was the penalty of sin for disobedience in the Garden of Eden. The nature of this “first death” was twofold and encompasses both a spiritual and physical death. The pronouncement of death was temporary, as Jesus Christ provided a way for the soul to be resurrected unto life and restored to a relationship with God. The power of physical death was also broken by Christ and there will be a physical resurrection of the body at the end of this time-world.



“The sentence of spiritual death was commuted through the forgiveness and pardon of Jesus Christ.”

The First Resurrection (Spiritual)

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power” (Revelation 20:6). The first resurrection is the spiritual resurrection that takes place when a sinner repents of his sin and is made alive through Jesus Christ. Jesus illustrated this in the story of the prodigal son who left home and broke the relationship with his father. When the prodigal son returned, the father rejoiced, “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24). The son was not physically dead but he was spiritually dead. When he left the life of sin, he was alive again. The spiritually dead are made alive through a spiritual resurrection.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:24-25). Jesus spoke not of the physically dead nor of the physical resurrection; rather, He referred to the spiritual state of the sinner who believed in the Lord and experienced life through the Son of God. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:5-6).

Spiritual Death Annulled

Romans 5:8-21 so poignantly teaches that sin and death came upon all men by the offence of

Adam; but, justification of life came by Jesus Christ our Lord. Man can now be reconciled back to God through the death and resurrection of His son. As Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26). The sentence of spiritual death was commuted through the forgiveness and pardon of Jesus Christ. Herein the spiritual aspect of the first death is annulled through a spiritual resurrection. This is beautifully illustrated in water baptism when we are buried with Christ in baptism and raised up from the dead to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4-5). While it is not the water that saves, baptism is a symbol of the resurrection that occurs when an individual is saved by the blood of Jesus. This spiritual resurrection, deliverance of the soul from the death of sin to a new life in Christ, is referred to as the first resurrection.

The Second Resurrection (Physical)

There remains a second phase of the first death which was physical. Jesus came to bring life in the fullest sense and provided a complete annulment of the first death. The soul was resurrected to life by the first resurrection and the body of death will be resurrected in the second resurrection. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). A physical resurrection will take place

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at a future date. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). Christ triumphed over death and conquered it through His resurrection. When Jesus returns there will be a physical resurrection, and all shall stand before the judgment seat of God. This body which was corruptible and mortal will be raised incorruptible with immortality. Death will be swallowed up in victory! (1 Corinthians 15:42-57).

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). This physical resurrection is referred to as the second resurrection. The pronouncement of death has been an umbrella over man ever since Adam; but through Christ, there are two resurrections that abolish and annul the twofold power of the first death. The first resurrection is salvation and the second resurrection is the physical resurrection from the dead.

The Second Death is Eternal

The first death is temporary through the power of Christ Jesus to all who avail themselves of the gift of God. There is a second pronouncement of death from God which is final and eternal; there will be no remedy ever given to escape the penalty of this second death.

“I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:12-15). The second death is eternal separation from God in a state of misery, darkness, and pain. The second death will occur at the judgement to all who refuse to

be delivered from the power of the first death through Jesus Christ.

No Antidote for Second Death

Hell is a place of torment (Luke 16:23-24) and outer darkness; there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13). Hell is an eternal abode “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-44). There will be no end to the spiritual and physical suffering and pain in this second death. There will be no hope of another saviour or redeemer, for there will be no antidote for this death.

All the ungodly and unredeemed will be under the unending power of the second death. “The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

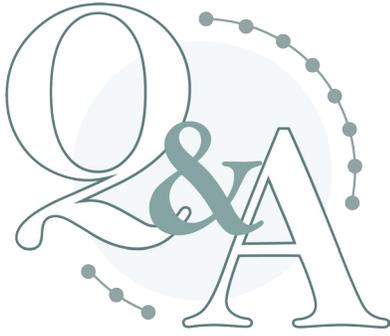
Be Saved to Escape the Second Death

Thank God, there is deliverance from the second death through Jesus Christ. While all mankind was under the power of the first death spiritually and physically because of Adam’s sin, all can be delivered from the power of the first death through Jesus Christ. The second death, eternity in hell, will have no power over those who have partaken of the spiritual resurrection. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power” (Revelation 20:6a).

The gift of Jesus Christ rectified the consequences of the first death and gives assurance of complete freedom from the second death. Accept the atonement of Jesus for sin and receive this great salvation. Walk daily in the footsteps of our Lord and live holy as it is pleasing to the Father. Heaven awaits those who have experienced the wonderful, spiritual resurrection and passed from death to life. The promise is fixed and the promise is sure: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Revelation 2:11b). ■



“There is a second pronouncement of death from God which is final and eternal; there will be no remedy ever given to escape the penalty of this second death.”



Does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 teach that the resurrection of the righteous will be at a different time and occasion than the unrighteous? It appears there may be two separate physical resurrections.

There will be only one physical resurrection from the grave. John 5:28-29 teaches this clearly. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Regardless of the teaching of many false prophets, Jesus said that the righteous and the unrighteous will be resurrected within the same hour, or within the same period. This is contrary to the millennial reign doctrine.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 tells us that when the Lord comes back the "dead in Christ shall rise first." It continues in verse 17: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." This passage gives a description of what will occur with the saints when the Lord returns. It does not address the fate of the wicked nor their resurrection to damnation as did Christ in John 5. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 was written to encourage those who had hope in Christ (v13) and to comfort the saints (v18).

There will be one universal physical resurrection at the coming of Jesus Christ.

Please explain Revelation 20:5-6 in the context of what is written concerning the thousand years.

The passage in question reads: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:5-6).

As a preface to this passage, let us remember the simple teaching of Jesus in John 5:24-29 concerning the two resurrections. One was clearly present and spiritual (the hour is coming, and NOW is), while the second was in the future and physical (the hour is COMING).

Now, let us consider the question at hand. Revelation 20:5-6 is not speaking of a physical resurrection of bodies but of the souls that had been martyred during the reign of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This passage in no way teaches or insinuates a millennial reign on earth. Verse 4 speaks of the "souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." It was these souls, not the physical bodies of the saints, that were reigning in paradise while there was so much apostasy and deception during the dark ages and beyond. Prior to this thousand years, or symbolic long period of time, the early morning church was seen on earth as triumphant and victorious. During the apostasy, it was primarily a false church in view on earth. Hence, a revelation was given of a church still reigning in paradise in spite of the apostasy on earth. The souls of those that were reigning were those whom had experienced the life-changing power of the first resurrection when they obtained salvation on earth before they were martyred.

The first resurrection is not exclusive to those who were martyred in the past but it was the first resurrection that enabled these souls to be reigning with Christ rather than succumbing to the power of the second death, or eternal damnation. When the thousand years was expired, or a long period of time elapsed, the church was once more seen on earth as victorious and triumphant.





DID YOU KNOW?

Revelation 22:1-2 illustrates the tree of life growing on both sides of the river of life which proceeds out of the throne of God. Verse three states that “there shall be no more curse.” The child of God has access to the tree of life today where spiritual death is no more. On the other side of the river, in eternity, the tree of life symbolically grows where all the redeemed can partake and have immortality in the presence of the Lamb of God.



A Word
in Season

WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.
—1 Corinthians 15:51

Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth to encourage them to be faithful to the Lord. Some will be dead and others will be living at the time of Christ’s return. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Child of God, a change is coming! Our physical bodies grow old and infirmity is a reality for many. Eventually, the body will die and return to the dust from which it was created. This is because of the curse of death placed upon mankind in the Garden of Eden. However, that curse is temporary to the saint of God. Jesus conquered death and broke the power of the curse. Praise God!

When Jesus returns, the dead will rise from the grave and all of God’s people of every kindred, tongue, and generation shall be changed. A great and mighty resurrection will occur across the world and ALL of God’s children will receive a glorified body. That which was mortal and corruptible will put on incorruption and immortality.

The change will be instantaneous and glorious. As God will raise the dead, so He will change the living into incorruptible beings that will never die. That which was weak and broken though life and physical death will not only be made strong but will be changed and new.

Our current physical bodies would not be able to withstand the beauty and grandeur of the place that God has prepared for us in Heaven. Hence, God plans to equip us with a physical body that can thrive in the joy of living for eternity in Heaven. These changed bodies, which will be the residence of our eternal spirits, will never again taste of death. God chose not to reveal the exact nature of this change, but this change will far surpass that which we can comprehend in this mortal body.

Be encouraged in life and in the process of death as you walk through the valley yourself or with a loved one. If you are saved and washed in the blood, there is coming a day when you will be changed! ■



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HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD