

A. WHY WE DIE - THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH (Rom 6:23)

The first mention of death in the bible is in the command to Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - "for when you eat of it you will surely die". (Gen 2:17) The Sin of Adam and Eve brought death: immediate spiritual death (Gen 3:8 they hid from God amongst the trees), eventual physical death when Adam was 930 years old (Gen 3:19, Gen 5:5), and the prospect of a second death (Rev 21:8), an eternity spent away from the presence of God.

"Sin when it is full grown gives birth to death" (James 1:15).

(1) Spiritual Death

Men who are still in their sins are spiritually dead even though they are physically alive (Eph 2:1, Col 2:13, Matt 8:22). Spiritual death is separation from God:

"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18)

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God. Your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear you." (Is 59:2)

"The mind of sinful man is death" (Rom 8:6)

A church too can be spiritually dead - see the church at Sardis (Rev 3:1).

(2) Physical Death

Obviously, physical death is a necessity for us as it is for animals. But for mankind physical death has a spiritual dimension, it is a consequence and a punishment for sin (Gen 2:17, 3:19).

"Therefore just as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." (Rom 5:12)

The connection between sin and physical death is illustrated by:

a) The decreasing span of men's lives from Adam to Abraham etc. until it stabilized at about 70 years (Gen 5, Gen 11, Ps 90:10).

b) The direct judgement of God resulting in the death of certain individuals or groups who are guilty of specific sins:

- The Flood, immorality, wickedness, evil thoughts, corruption, violence, (Gen 6, Gen 4:23-25)
- Sodom and Gomorrah, immorality, homosexuality (Gen 18-19 Jude 7)
- Egyptians First Born, (Ex 11-12)
- Israelites in Desert, idolatry (Ex 32:27-29), discouragement and rebellion (Num 14:37, Num 16), complaint (Num 21:6), sin and unbelief (Heb 3:7-19)
- Men of Beth Shemesh, looking at the ark of the Lord (1 Sam 6:19)
- Nabal, mean (1 Sam 25:38)
- Uzzah, touching the ark of the Lord (2 Sam 6:7)
- Ananias and Sapphira, lying (Acts 5:1-10)
- Herod, being worshipped (Acts 12:23)
- Corinthians, breaking bread in an unworthy manner (1 Cor 11:30)

c) The putting to death of individuals or groups for specific sins:

- Occupants of Canaan to be exterminated by the Israelites for their many sins including: social injustice, incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, prostitution, idolatry, child sacrifice, witchcraft, mediums, fertility rites, occult (Gen 15:16, Deut 7:1-6, 9:4-5, Lev 18-20, Lev 18:3, 20:23).
- Israelites for golden calf killed by Levites (Ex 32:27-29)
- Achan stoned for deceit (Joshua 7:24-25)

d) The death penalty included in the Law of God

The death penalty was widely used for a number of offences - in a very practical way, the wages of sin was death:

- Dishonouring God and False Religion

- Sacrifice to other Gods (Ex 22:20)
- Working on the Sabbath (Ex 35:2)
- Desecrating Sabbath (Ex 31:14-15, Num 15:36)
- Child sacrifice (Lev 20:2)
- Turning others away from the Lord (Deut 13:13-18)
- Sorcery (Ex 22:18)
- Mediums and wizards (Lev 20:27)
- Blaspheming the name of the Lord (Lev 24:16)
- Non-Levites going near tabernacle etc. (Num 1:51)
- Non-Aaronites doing priestly duties (Num 3:10, 38, Num 18:7)
- Worship of other gods, sun, moon, stars (Deut 17:2-7)
- False prophets (Deut 18:20)

- Sexual Immorality

- Adultery (Lev 20:10, Deut 22:22)
- Incest (Lev 20:11-12)
- Homosexuality (Lev 20:13)
- Bestiality (Lev 20:15-16)
- Promiscuity before marriage (Deut 22:20-21)
- Sex with another while pledged to be married (Deut 22:23-24)
- Rape of girl pledged to be married (Deut 22:25-27)

- Other

- Murder (Gen 9:6, Ex 21:12-15, Lev 24:17, 21, Num 35:16-21, 30-31)
- Negligent murder (Ex 21:29)
- Kidnapping (Ex 21:16)
- Cursing parents (Lev 20:9, Ex 21:17)
- Disobedient child (Deut 21:21)
- Contempt of court (Deut 17:12)

(3) The Second Death (Rev 21:8)

The second death is the tragic end of those who remain in their sins. It is the ultimate consequence, wage, or punishment for sin. It is permanent exclusion from the presence of God. "The lake of fire is the second death." (Rev 20:14)

"All this is evidence that God's judgement is right..... This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." (2 Thess 1:5, 7-9)

It is described as death of the soul:

"The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ez 18:4, 20)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul - Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt 10:28, Luke 12:4-5)

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels and then he will reward each person according to what they have done." (Matt 16:26-27)

Sins Linked with the Final Judgement

There are several places in the New Testament where certain sins are linked with the final judgement and the second death:

Unbelieving	debauchery	strife	drunkards
practice magic	orgies	deceit	envy
idolators	obsenity	malice	arrogant
God-haters	course joking	gossipers	boastful
witchcraft	lust	insolent	senseless
	evil desires	disobey parents	faithless
sexually immoral	filthy language	hatred	heartless
vile		discord	ruthless
adulterers	murderers	fits of rage	jealousy
male prostitutes	liars	dissentions	selfish ambition
homosexuals	thieves	factions	greed
lesbians	slanderers		
impurity	swindlers	cowardly	

Of people who do such things:

- Their place will be in the fiery lake of sulphur. This is the second death (Rev 21:8)
- They will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21, Eph 5:3-5)
- The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven.....those who do such things deserve death(Rom 1:18-32)
- Because of these the wrath of God is coming (Col 3:5-9)

B. THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN (1 Cor 15:56)

Without the salvation which Jesus offers, death has bleak prospects. The sting of death is sin and we have all sinned:

- "We have all gone astray like lost sheep."(Is 53:6)
- "There is on-one righteous, not even one."(Rom 3:10)
- "We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God."(Rom 3:23)
- "Death came to all men because all sinned."(Rom 5:12)
- "The result of one trespass(Adam's), was condemnation for all men(Rom 5:18)

No-one will be saved by their own righteousness, if sin remains then the sting of death remains. Any peace which an unbeliever has in physical death is but an illusion, there is no salvation apart from Jesus.(Acts 4:12)

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."
(Prov 14:10).

For the unbeliever, we can give physical and material comfort in their death but we can give no assurances about the future.

C. OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST HAS DESTROYED DEATH AND BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL (1 Tim 1:10)

"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Jesus Christ, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."
(Rom 8:1-2)

Jesus by his death and resurrection has:

- Taken away our sin(1 Peter 2:24, 2 Cor 5:21, Heb 9:26)
- By the grace of God tasted death for every man(Heb 2:9)
- Removed the sting of death(1 Cor 15:54-57)
- Removed the fear of death which brought bondage(Heb 2:14)

We see Paul looking forward to his physical death without fear but with anticipation "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" (Phil 1:21, 2 Cor 5:1-8)
The triumph over death is complete and covers all aspects:

(1)Triumph over Spiritual Death

When we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus, we become alive with Christ (Eph 2:5), we have passed from death to life and our eternal life begins now. (Jn 5:24-27, 1 Jn 3:14, Rom 6:13, Eph 5:14)

(2)Triumph over Physical Death

For the unbeliever, physical death is a punishment for sin but for the believer this can no longer be so since our sins have been forgiven and the sting of death removed(Heb 9:15,28). For the Christian, physical death is a gateway to light and life with Christ - those who are left until the coming of the Lord will not even need to experience physical death(1 Thess 4:17, 1 Cor 15:51-52). Death is a shedding of our sinful body, our earthly tent, so that we can put on a new body a heavenly dwelling - we will not be naked, bodiless spirits for eternity (2 Cor 5:1-4). The resurrection of Christ who is the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep gives us confidence in the fact that we will be raised with new bodies(1 Cor 15:20-23).

Our natural bodies are mortal, perishable, sown in dishonour and weakness
Our spiritual resurrection bodies will be immortal, imperishable, raised in glory and power (1 Cor 15:42-44)
The dishonour and weakness which we experience in death are only a reflection of the glory and power of our future bodies.

Jesus said that those who keep his word will not see death. The eternal life which we now possess will continue with us beyond the grave.(Jn 8:51)

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.(Jn 6:54)

The mission of Jesus was to bring light to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death(Matt 4:16, Luke 1:78-79). There need be no fear of death for the believer(Heb 2:14).

(3)Triumph over the Second Death

- "He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death."(Rev 2:11)
- "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover over a multitude of sins."(James 5:20)
- "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."(1 Thess 5:9)
- "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."
(Rev 21:4)
- "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." (Rev 22:14)
- "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"(Rom 8:1)

D. OTHER USES OF THE IDEA OF DEATH IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANS

(1)We died to Sin(Rom 6:2) - When we believe in Jesus and receive the power of his Spirit in our lives, we can count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Our old self was crucified with Christ so that we need no longer be slaves to sin. (Rom 6:1-14, Rom 8:9-14, Col 2:20, Col 3.35, 1 Peter 2:24)

(2)We died to the Law(Rom 7:1-6, Gal 2:19-20)

(3)Dying in Suffering - Paul often speaks of his suffering and persecution as sharing in the death of Christ, a kind of death in this world. (2 Cor 6:9, 1 Cor 15:30, 2 Cor 4:10-11, Phil 3:10)

A. PHYSICAL DEATH

For the unbeliever, physical death is the wages of sin but for the believer it is the gateway to new life. Physical death is a biological necessity for the Christian but not a spiritual necessity - indeed some of us will not physically die when Jesus returns but we shall be changed (1 Cor 15:51).

Physical death is putting aside the tent of this body (2 Peter 1:13-14 2 Cor 5:1). It is a separation of the body from the soul/spirit (Matt 10:28, Luke 12:4, James 2:26)

"the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7 see also Gen 2:7).

Life is brief, it is like a shadow (Ps 102:11)
 swifter than a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6)
 swifter than a runner (Job 9:25)
 a mere handbreadth (Ps 39:5)
 like a waver's cloth cut from the loom (Is 38:12)
 like a mist (James 4:14)

Death need not be feared (Ps 23:4)
 is precious for saints (Ps 116:15)
 is gain (Phil 1:21)
 is leaving the things of the world behind (1 Tim 6:7, Job 1:21)
 is a one-way journey of no return (Job 16:22)
 levels all ranks (Job 3:17-19)

Hezekiah denied death and was given an extension (Is 38)
Job longed for death but it did not come (Job 3:21)

B. THE AFTER-LIFE - AN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

Without the good news of Jesus and his resurrection, the Old Testament writers did not always have a very positive or optimistic view of life after death. In fact at the time of Jesus there were a group of Jewish teachers, the Sadducees, who taught that there was no resurrection and denied the existence of angels of and spirits (Mk 12:18, Acts 23:8) The Pharisees, however, did believe in the resurrection of the dead. (See also Martha's confession Jn 11:24)

Sheol

Often the Old Testament speaks of a shadowy existence after death called Sheol (NIV translates this as "grave" but adds a footnote that the word is sheol).

The word is used in three main ways:

- a) The grave (Gen 42:38)
- b) State or condition of the dead represented as a place (1 Sam 2:6, Ps 89:48). For the righteous and unrighteous.
- c) A place of punishment (Deut 32:22, Ps 9:17) sometimes.

Sheol is not extinction, but it is not true life either:

- A place below (Ezek 26:20, Prov 15:24)
- A land of darkness (Job 10:21-22, Ps 88:12)
- A land of silence (Ps 115:17, Ps 94:17)
- A state away from God (Ps 88:5,11 Ps 6:5, Ps 30:9, Is 38:18)
- A place of weakness and gathering of the dead (Is 14:9-10)

Dying is seen to be a sad affair (often called the shadow of death) and there is great desire to live and to have one's life extended. Judgement is seen mainly in this life and long life is seen as a blessing from God (Deut 30:15-20).

Occasionally there are glimpses of faith in a joyful existence beyond the grave in the presence of God for the righteous:

"because you will not abandon me to sheol, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." (Ps 16:10-11)

"even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Ps 23 4,6)

"But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself" (Ps 49:15)

"You guide me with your counsel and afterwards you will take me into glory" (Ps 73:24)

"When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge" (Prov 14:32)

(2) Resurrection

There are a few passages in the Old Testament which speak of resurrection:

"I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:25-26)

"But your dead will live, their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy." (Is 26:19)

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan 12:2)

Abraham believed in the power of resurrection. (Gen 22:5, Heb 11:19)

The taking up of Enoch and Elijah who did not see physical death must have given hope for the future. (Gen 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11)

Certain people were raised from the dead in the Old Testament:

- Son of widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:22)
- Son of Shunammite (2 Kings 4:35)
- Dead man restored to life (2 Kings 13:21)

The Old Testament does not distinguish between body, soul and spirit very clearly and any idea of resurrection would include the whole person.

C. THE AFTER-LIFE - A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

The New Testament teaches that after physical death we will rise to judgement.

(1) The Intermediate State

This is the state between physical death and resurrection.

(a) The Believer (Resting in paradise)

Death is sometimes described as falling asleep (Acts 7:60, Acts 13:36, Matt 27:52, 1 Thess 4:13-14, 1 Cor 15:6) and the state of the dead in Christ is described as sleep (1 Cor 15:51, Matt 9:24, Jn 11:11) This description does not mean that it will be sleep as we know it - other passages suggest that we will go to be with the Lord:

The poor man, Lazarus, at Abraham's side (Luke 16:19-31)

Jesus to the thief "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43)

"I desire to depart and be with Christ which is better by far" (Phil 1:23)

"Absent from the body at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8)

The souls of the martyrs "wait a little longer" (Rev 6:9-11)

"neither death nor life....nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38)

The state may best be described as a conscious resting in the presence of the Lord with a knowledge of his love.

(b) The Unbeliever (Hades (Gk) = Sheol (Heb))

In the New Testament, Hades is an unhappy place linked with the death of the wicked. Jesus says that Capernaum will go down to Hades because of their lack of repentance (Matt 11:23, Luke 10:15). In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man Hades is place of torment separated by a great chasm from the abode of the righteous (Luke 16:23). This parable suggests consciousness in Hades.

Jesus states that he will build his church on the rock and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matt 16:18), indeed the risen Jesus holds the keys of Death and

(2)The Resurrection

Both the righteous and wicked will be raised at the coming of Jesus:

"All those who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."(John 5:28-29) See Dan 12:2, Act 24:15.

A lack of faith in the resurrection is error.(2 Tim 2:18, 1 Cor 15:12)

(a)What will happen ?

Jesus will come from heaven with a loud command, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet call of God.

The dead in Christ will rise first with resurrection bodies.

Jesus will come with his saints.

Those who are alive in Christ will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and be changed to their new resurrection bodies.

All these will be taken up to be with the Lord for ever.

(1 Cor 15:51-53, 1 Thess 4:13-18, Matt 24:30-31, 40-44, Luke 17:34-35, 2 Thess 2:1)

Jesus said "I will raise him up at the last day"(John 6:40,44,54)

"When he appears, we will appear with him in glory"(Col 3:4)

The coming of Jesus will involve judgement on the earth(Rev 19:11-21). After this first resurrection, the believers will reign with Christ for 1000 years during which Satan is bound(Rev 20:1-6). Christ must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet and destroyed all dominion, authority, and power, including death; then he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father(1 Cor 15:24-28). After the 1000 year reign ther will be a final attempt by Satan to destroy God's people but he will be cast into the lake of fire(Rev 20:7-10). This will herald the resurrection of the unbelievers and the judgement of all great and small before the great white throne.(Rev 20:11-15)

(b)Resurrection Bodies

"Who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"(Phil 3:21).

- Our new bodies will be Like angels(Matt 22:30)
- Incorruptible, immortal(1 Cor 15:42)
- Glorious(1 Cor 15:43)
- Powerful(1 Cor 15:43)
- Spiritual(1 Cor 15:44)
- Like Christ(1 Cor 15:49, Phil 3:21)
- Not Flesh and blood(1 Cor 15:50)
- No male and female(Matt 22:30)

Our resurrection bodies will bear a resemblance to our earthly bodies in the same way that a plant is related to its seed(1 Cor 15:35-37, 42-44). Notice that the resurrection body of Jesus was not entirely like his earthly body but there was some resemblance(Luke 24:31, 39-40, John 20:16-17, 20). Sometimes he was not recognised(Luke 24:16, John 20:14). His body could pass through walls etc.

(3)Judgement and the Final End

Judgement will come to all men:

"Just as man is destined to die once and after that to face judgement(Heb 9:27)."

"For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Cor 5:10)

"For we will all stand before God's judgement seat.....So that each of us will give an account of himself to God"(Rom 14:10,12).

Jesus will judge: Acts 10:42, 17:31, Matt 25:31-33, John 5:19-30

(a)The Books Opened(Rev 20:11-15)

Numerous passages in the bible make it plain that all will be judged according to their deeds in this life - or their works (Ps 62:12, Jer 17:10, Matt 16:21, 1 Peter 1:17, Rev 22:12 etc.)

When the books are opened(Rev 20:12-13, Dan 7:10), our lives will be laid bare. None of us will be saved by our works lest we should boast in the presence of God(Eph 2:8,9) and no-one has lived a good enough life(Rom 3:9-20).

(b)Unbelievers

Principles of judgement:

- i)God is just and his judgements are true(Gen 18:25)
- ii)Judgement is according to what we have done(Rom 2:1-11)
- iii)Men will be judged by the light they have including the witness of nature to God(Rom 1:18-20)
- iv)Jews will be judged by the Law(Rom 2:12)
- v)Those without the law will be judged by the law of God written on their hearts by conscience(Rom 2:14-16).

For unbelievers, their works will condemn them and they have no means of escaping the wrath of God(Heb 2:3), their names are not written in the book of life(Rev 20:15), and they will be thrown into the lake of fire, the second death, where they will suffer eternal punishment - exclusion from the presence of God(2 Thess 1:9), weeping and gnashing of teeth(Matt 13:42,50), and where their worm does not die (Mk 9:43,48). This is hell.

(c)Believers

Believers in Jesus will not persih but have eternal life(John 3:16), they will be saved by grace through faith(Eph 2:8), they are justified by faith(Rom 5:1), Jesus is their advocate and will speak in their defense because he died for their sins (1 John 2:1, Rev 3:5). Their names are written in the lambs book of life in heaven which is a record of the saved(Ex 32:33, Ps 69:28, Dan 12:1, Luke 10:20, Phil 4:3, Heb 12:23, Rev 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 21:27, 22:19). Judgement has lost its terror for the believer(Rom 8:1, 33-34). They will be saved by the works of Christ on the cross.

Believers will be judged according to their works on a reward or loss basis but not on the basis of salvation(1 Cor 3:13-15). See the parables of the talents and the minas(Matt 25:14-30)(Luke 19:11-27). Various rewards are mentioned in the bible eg. Dan 12:3, Matt 10:42, and the letters to the 7 churches Rev 2-3. Special rewards for righteousness, service to God, suffering for Christ.(Matt 5:12, 2 Tim 2:12, Heb 11:26, Eph 6:8).

After the destruction of death and hades, there will be a recreation - a new heaven and new earth with no division between the two. There will be a heavenly city for the saved to live in the place prepared by Jesus(John 14:1-3) and they will see God's face and enjoy happiness and joy eternally with the Lord.(Rev 21-22).

D.THE AFTER-LIFE - OTHER PERSPECTIVES

(1)Purgatory

Catholics teach that there is an intermediate state called purgatory where unsanctified believers are punished and refined before moving on to heaven. Masses and prayers are said for the dead, indulgences etc. This teaching suggests that we can do something for our own sins and detracts from the work of Jesus who was the only sacrifice for sin. Scripture speaks nothing of purgatory.

(2)A Second Chance

Some teach that after death all will get a second chance to hear the gospel and repent. Arguments are usually based on the obscure verses in 1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:6. The weight of scripture is that we will be judged for what we have done in this life(Matt 7:22,23, 10:32,33, 25:34-46, 2 Cor 5:9-10, 2 Thess 1:8). A great chasm is fixed after this life(Luke 16:26) and we will not escape if we neglect so great a salvation(Heb 2:1-3)

(3)Reincarnation

The bible speaks consistently of a linear fate and destiny for mankind, not a cyclic one.

"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement"(Heb 9:27)

(4)Annihilation

Popular materialism believes that "when you are dead, you are dead" and that you have no further conscious existence. Some believers would assume that this is true for the unsaved since they find it difficult to cope with the idea of eternal punishment in hell etc. As we have shown earlier, the bible speaks clearly of a resurrection of the lost(Dan 12:2, John 5:28-29) and of eternal punishment(Rev 20:10, Mk 9:48, Rev 14:11).

(5)Spiritism

Spiritists(or Spiritualists) believe that spirits of dead people can be accessed through a medium. It is understandable that those who have lost loved ones may wish to contact them in the "next world". There is also a desire in many people to investigate life after death via spiritism and to use the power of spirits to heal, provide information etc.

The bible makes it clear that we are not to meddle in this way:

- a)The death sentence for mediums in Old Testament(Lev 20:27).
- b)God's anger against a person who turns to mediums or spiritists (Lev 19:31, 20:6)
- c)We should enquire of God - not of the dead(Is 8:19)
- d)Such consultation will bring disaster(Is 19:4)
- e)They prophesy lies(Jer 27:9-10)

The only account(detailed) of spiritism in the bible is when Saul consulted the witch of Endor(1 Sam 28). Notice that:

- a)Saul is disobedient to God and deceitful in consulting a medium.
- b)The experience of the medium was alarming(she cried out) - this was no ordinary seance - God was intervening ?
- c)Saul died because he had been unfaithful to the Lord and consulted a medium for guidance instead of enquiring of the Lord(1 Chron 10:13).

That God is capable of bringing back people from the dead on a temporary basis is proved by the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration where we get a preview of the resurrection(Matt 17:1-3) and also the appearance of many holy people in Jerusalem after the death of Jesus(Matt 27:52-53). But we are not to seek contact with the dead.

Because of the wickedness of spiritism, we cannot rely on the validity of such contact with the dead. There is every reason to believe that demons are responsible for the experiences of mediums and that manifestations of spirits of the dead are delusions propogated by Satan to prevent people from understanding the truth.

(6)Return from Death Experiences

Many people have described their experiences, dreams, visions, revelations etc. when they have been clinically dead for a while and then resuscitated. These accounts are often powerful and convincing and have even brought people to repentance and faith.

As with any personal revelation, we must be careful not to build our doctrine of the afterlife on these experiences which may or may not be relevant. We must always maintain a clear biblical perspective