



Can Spirit Die?

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*...I will destroy thee O covering Cherub...
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As human beings, we are familiar with the concept of dying. It is ingrained into the very nature of all plant, animal, and human life as we know it. We see death in our local news and in the movies we watch. It is in the wars we fight, and we experience it personally when we lose friends and family to its inevitable claim. Our mortality is a fact of our existence.

However, those who believe in the after life may wonder; what about the spirit world? Is it possible for spirit beings to be destroyed? Can they die, or are they immortal—like God? Certainly God the Father and Jesus Christ have immortality. They literally have self-existent life, and it was this fact that prompted the apostle Paul to write:

In his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; **who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honor and power everlasting. Amen (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Paul's statement declares that God alone has immortality. He not only possesses unending life, but He also has the ability to miraculously give that life to others, or take it from them. However, when Jesus walked the earth as a human He no longer possessed this divine trait (Phi. 2:8). And yet, he prophesied that He would once again possess this attribute after His resurrection. As He said:

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have **life in himself**; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in 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 5:26-29).

The Savior explained that God the Father would once again confer this power on Him, and that He would then be empowered to transfer eternal life to the Saints at the time of their resurrection. By this, Jesus demonstrated that He did not have this power while human. Christ died and was in the grave three days and three nights. It was only after His resurrection from the grave that He was no longer subject to death. As Paul again states:

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead **shall die no more**; death hath no more dominion over him (Romans 6:9).

Thus, it is clear that before Christ's incarnation as a human being He was very God and possessed life within Himself. In order to fulfill God's plan, He emptied Himself of this divine power. He became flesh and blood and, as such, was no longer in possession of eternal life. The Mighty Word became

subject to death (Php. 2:6-8). It was only after His death and resurrection that Jesus once again possessed immortality.

However, what about other forms of spirit? Can they die? What about Satan? He is a very powerful spirit being. Is it possible for him to die? Can angelic beings be destroyed, or did God create something that even He cannot permanently eliminate?

A Sovereign God

God is the Almighty. He created the worlds by His Word, and He upholds the universe by the enormous power of that word (Psa. 33:6; Heb. 1:3). There is not a single utterance by God that He cannot fulfill (Lk. 1:37). In that context, what does God say about spirit?

From the previous verses we see the absolute sovereignty of God. He created all things and has complete power over everything—including the spirit world. The totality of His awesome power is clearly seen when we consider that which is physical. As the apostle Paul explains:

The **invisible things** of him from the creation of the world **are clearly seen**, being understood by **the things that are made**, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

By this statement we realize that there are patterns in our physical world that reveal spiritual truths. For example, God required Moses to make the earthly tabernacle after a heavenly pattern (Heb. 8:5). We also recognize that man is made in God's image (Gen. 1:27). Adam was the first man born of the flesh, and Christ is referred to as the second Adam—the first human to be born of the spirit (1 Cor. 15:45).

Because man is made in the image of God, he has awesome creative powers in the physical realm. Man is capable of building vast cultures, libraries, artwork, and incredible computerized mechanisms. In considering such awesome human abilities, it is important to realize that what ever man can create, he is also capable of destroying.

With the comprehension that our physical world reflects aspects of God's spirit world, and that our powers of creation are but a faint reflection of God's, the truth becomes obvious. If man can destroy what he creates, certainly the Almighty God can also destroy anything He has created—whether it is physical or spirit.

The Spirit in Man

Throughout the Scriptures we are repeatedly shown that the wages of sin is death (Gen. 3:3; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23). We are also told that God is not a respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11, Acts 10:34). Do such verses only apply to that which is physical, or do they also apply to that which is spirit?

Consider the spirit in man. The Scriptures reveal that man does not have an immortal soul (Ezek. 18:20). The word soul is the word “nephesh” in the Hebrew, and it simply means a physical, living, breathing creature. In this respect, man is like the animals (Ecc. 3:19; Gen. 2:7, 19). He is subject to death.

However, humans possess something that other physical creatures do not. God has given mankind an element of invisible spirit that works in conjunction with his physical brain. That spirit gives man the power of mind—a unique intelligence that grants us far greater understanding than the animals which sometimes possess larger brains (Job 32:8).

It is this spirit that provides man with amazing intellect. It gives us insight, enabling us to understand the mind of other men and creatures on the planet. This spirit makes possible the astonishing

creative powers that we wield on this earth, enabling us to subjugate all other things to ourselves (1 Cor. 2:11; Gen. 1:26).

It is this same spirit that allows us to introspect, to question our motives, and to exercise a conscience. When a man dies, this spirit temporarily goes back to God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). But, can this spirit be destroyed? The Scriptures give us the answer as they address the resurrections.

In the book of Revelation, Christ reveals that the second death will have no power over those who are raised in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6). Those faithful few will be given inherent life just as Jesus was at His resurrection. By means of that same spirit, those in the second resurrection will also be raised, but only to physical life. It is during this time that they will be offered salvation, and choose to live God's way or not. Those in the third resurrection who are not found written in the book of life, will be cast into the lake of fire and suffer the second death! As the apostle John writes:

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead who 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 20:13-15).

Does this second death only apply to the flesh? What happens to the spirit in this awesome inferno? At the time these wicked individuals are burned up, is their spirit destroyed or, does it go back to God all over again? Consider that if it were to go back to God, then there would be no point in raising these individuals a second time! God could simply leave them in their prior state—dead!

God is all powerful. He is omnipotent, and can destroy anything that He creates. Therefore, the Almighty can destroy the spirit in man. The purpose of the lake of fire can only be to eliminate both the flesh and spirit. Jesus Christ actually confirms this truth as He warns us with these words:

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to **destroy both soul and body** in hell (Matthew 10:28).

The word “soul” in this verse is “psuchē” in the Greek. This unique word means “breath,” or by implication the “spirit.” The word “destroy” means to “fully destroy,” or “to perish.” Therefore, Jesus is plainly telling us that, while man is able to kill the physical body, only God can destroy our spirit. For this reason, we are warned to fear the Almighty One who can destroy both body and spirit.

The Scriptures make it clear that God can destroy the spirit in man, but what about other forms of spirit? Can God destroy living spirit beings that were created before the physical universe existed? Does He have the power to destroy angels?

The Devil and his Demons

As early as the book of Genesis, the Scriptures begin to reveal the ultimate fate of the devil. After this wicked spirit seduced Eve into eating from the forbidden tree, God made a unique prophetic announcement, stating:

And I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; **it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel** (Genesis 3:15).

Because of this first human sin, Christ would be bruised in His heel. However, Satan would ultimately be bruised in the head. In other words, because the devil caused man to sin, Satan appeared to have won that first round, but the “game” was not over. Ultimately, Satan would do a limited amount of damage to the Son of Man, but our Savior would strike a fatal blow this fallen angel.

This truth becomes even more obvious as we examine the original language. The Hebrew word for “bruise” is “shûph,” meaning to crush. The word “head” can mean “chief, principal, or ruler.” Thus, Christ would eventually destroy the one who had become mankind’s ruler—Satan the devil. This is also confirmed in the New Testament where Paul he reminds Christians that:

The God of peace **shall bruise Satan** under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you. Amen (Romans 16:20).

Here the Greek word for bruise is “suntríbō,” and it means to “crush completely.” By this, we see that Paul’s statement forcefully drives the point home. Satan’s end is much worse than that of Christ. If Jesus was temporarily damaged by physical death, then there can be no other conclusion. Satan will be permanently destroyed!

The Spirit behind the Throne

In another case, during the history of the Old Covenant, God addressed the king of Tyre. As He did so, God’s words shift to focus on a being much greater than the human king. God actually begins to speak to the devil. It is he who was the real power behind the throne (Mat. 4:8-9). For this reason, the Almighty speaks directly to him, stating:

Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: **and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub**, from the midst of the stones of fire (Ezekiel 28:14-16).

At one time, the devil held the position of a covering cherub at the very throne of God, but clearly this verse says that he will be destroyed. Because this verse states that he will be “destroyed from the midst of the stones,” some have argued that this only tells us that the devil will be removed from the exalted position he once held with God. However, further analysis shows that this cannot be the only punishment God intends for Satan.

In this verse, the Hebrew word for “destroy” is “âbad.” While in some cases, the word can refer to the act of being removed, other Scriptures show that the word is frequently translated as “perish” or “destroy” (i.e. Num. 17:12; Deut. 11:4). When speaking figuratively, Strong’s Concordance explains that the word always means “perish.” Certainly these verses are figurative. They are prophetic and speak in symbolic language. Therefore, these verses reveal that the devil will eventually perish.

Further evidence of Satan’s fate is found in verse 19 of this same chapter. There, God makes the devil’s fate absolutely clear by stating:

All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and **never shalt thou be any more** (Ezekiel 28:19).

If the answer to the question, “can spirit die,” were only based on this passage, we would have enough evidence to reach the proper conclusion. Spirit can be destroyed, and Satan will ultimately suffer this fate. However, there is more evidence to consider.

Tormented by Impending Destruction

When this subject is explored in the New Testament, the same conclusion is reached. Consider an example found in the book of Hebrews. There the author writes:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that **through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil** (Hebrews 2:14).

The author of this epistle clearly and powerfully states that Christ will destroy the devil, but how and when will He destroy him? The answer is literally repeated throughout the Bible in different terms. We are told that the devil will be destroyed in a place referred to as “the lake of fire,” “eternal fire,” and a “place of torment” (Rev. 20:10-15; 21:8; Jude 1:7; Lk. 16:28). In that context, it is interesting to note that an entire group of demons speak to Christ in regard to this final punishment, asking him:

What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither **to torment us** before the time? (Matthew 8:29)

By reading only this one verse, some might assume that the demons will only be tormented in the lake of fire and not be completely destroyed. However, as will be demonstrated, their torment is actually facing impending death. This fact becomes evident when examining the illustration given by Jesus of a rich man who would one day stand before the lake of fire—awaiting judgment and the second death. As he faces this raging furnace, he begs permission to warn his family of this fate, saying:

I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into **this place of torment** (Luke 16:27-28).

The verse above shows that the time and place in which the rich man is tormented is when he **faces** the lake of fire. He is not yet consumed by it, but is tormented by the realization that his death is now certain.

The demons also fear this same distress. The time and place of their torment is when they, along with the devil, face their eternal destruction in the fierce heat generated by this same lake of fire.

A Demon Speaks

The torment spoken of in the previous verses is the fear of utter and complete destruction. This is also proven by an entirely different incident in which Jesus encountered a demonic spirit residing in a man. In the ensuing dialogue, the wicked spirit spoke to Jesus, saying:

Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? **Art thou come to destroy us?** I know thee who thou art the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24).

In this verse the demons use the term “destroy” when referring to their fate. This word is the very same one used in Matthew 10 where Jesus says that God can destroy both the spirit and the flesh. The word is “apollumi” in the Greek and means to “destroy fully, to perish, or to die.” Thus, the Bible repeatedly demonstrates this truth. God is fully capable, and intends, to eliminate both wicked humans and angelic spirits.

Reserved for Judgment

According to the Scriptures, Satan’s impending doom is undeniable. God’s Word not only foretells the devil’s fate, but also exactly when and how the Almighty will do this. The time of the devil’s execution is referred to as the “judgment of the great day.” It is the day in God’s plan that ends with a massive lake of fire that burns up the heavens, the earth, and all of the wicked. As Peter writes:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be **reserved unto judgment** (2 Peter 2:4).

If the angels that sinned are reserved for a judgment, what is that judgment? What kind of sentence do they face? The book of Jude explains:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto **the judgment of the great day**. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering **the vengeance of eternal fire** (Jude 1:6-7).

As the Scriptures explain, the judgment of the great day is the time when the fallen angels suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Thus, we see that their judgment is to be cast into the lake of fire at the very end of the age. Christ speaks to us about this final verdict saying:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels** (Matthew 25:41).

From this statement, we understand two things. First, the lake of fire will be prepared for the devil and the fallen angels. Second, we see that the wicked spirits will face a judgment that will be “everlasting.”

As a point of clarification, this term does not mean that the flames, along with the pain and suffering, will go on and on forever. When the scriptures speak of this fire being Eternal, the meaning is that the consequence of the fire is everlasting. God will not reverse it.

The Greek word for “everlasting” is “aiōnois.” It simply means that their judgment is one that is final! It is “eternal,” leaving no room for an eventual return from death. Those who receive this judgment will not have their sentence commuted and neither will this verdict be reversed.

The apostle Peter shows us that this fire is also reserved for two other groups. It is for the perdition of ungodly men and for the heavens and the earth that now exist. He writes:

But **the heavens and the earth**, which are now, by the same word, are kept in store, **reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men** (2 Peter 3:7).

This final sentence is called “the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” The word “perdition” simply means to die, perish, or be made waste. Those who are ultimately destined for this fire will experience physical, spiritual and eternal destruction.

It is interesting to note that this verse speaks of another purpose for this fire. The heavens and earth will also be burned up in this massive conflagration. Every vestige of sin will be erased from the physical creation. This fact also serves as profound evidence that this fire does not burn for all eternity. It is started at the end of the age, and like any other physical fire, it will burn itself out when there is no longer fuel left for combustion.

Speaking of this blaze, Peter explains how it will utterly consume everything that it touches. The apostle writes:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens **shall pass away** with a great noise, and **the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up**. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved*, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein **the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?** (2 Peter 3:10-12)

The time spoken of by Peter is after Christ's 1000 year reign on the earth. This massive blaze will destroy the entire physical creation—the whole universe! It is the same fire that will destroy the devil, his demons, and the ungodly at the time of final judgment (Rev. 20:10-15).

Notice the words that Peter uses to describe the effects of this raging inferno. Everything it touches shall pass away, melt, be burned up, and be dissolved.

<i>Peter's Words</i>	<i>Original Greek</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Pass away	Parerchomai	Perish
Melt	Luō	Break (up), destroy, dissolve
Burned up	Katakaiō	Burned down, consume wholly
Dissolved	Luō	Break (up), destroy, dissolve

The current heavens and earth will no longer exist after being engulfed in this conflagration. They will not continue to burn for the rest of eternity. They will be dissolved—wholly consumed—DESTROYED! They will PERISH! In like manner, the devil and his demons do not continue to live after they have been cast into this fire. They will not be tortured by excruciating pain for eternity. They, along with rebellious humans, will be burned up!

How can Spirit be destroyed?

As we have seen, God's judgment is that Satan and the fallen angels will be destroyed in the lake of fire. As far as we know, in the physical realm, fire can only affect matter. However, the devil and his angels are not physical. This brings up an interesting question. What kind of fire is it that could possibly destroy these spirits?

Earlier the apostle Paul was quoted to demonstrate that the physical creation was designed to reflect spiritual truths. From this we understood that because man is made in God's image, he has fantastic creative abilities. Further, man has the ability to destroy what he has created. Therefore, it is understood that God, who possesses supreme powers, can also destroy anything He has made.

However, there is another aspect of God's principle of physical and spiritual duality that is important to understand. In our physical world, we have discovered the law of the conservation of matter. This law states that while matter cannot be created or destroyed, it can be changed. It can be transformed into energy. Thus, it is logical to conclude that there is a spiritual law that parallels this famous law of physics. In other words, since God created the physical creation to reflect the spirit world, is it possible that, like the law regarding matter, spirit cannot be created or destroyed? While that may be a possibility, what we do know for certain is that, like matter, **spirit can be changed!**

Consider the Physical World

When we consider the physical realm, we understand that it was not created from nothing. The laws of nature teach us that only nothing can come from nothing. The universe had to be made from something, but what? Certainly it was not created of preexisting matter. The Scriptures reveal that it was actually made from spirit! As the author of Hebrews states:

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that **things which are seen were not made of things which do appear** (Hebrews 11:3).

From this, we realize that God created the material world out of something, but the substance was not visible to the human eye. Spirit is invisible, and therefore the only sound conclusion is that the physical universe was made from invisible spirit.

This leads to the profound realization that, when creating the physical universe, God has changed spirit to matter. This being the case, it is not only possible, but highly likely that spirit beings can be transformed to that which is physical. Then, in this state, they could be burned up in an inferno such as the lake of fire.

As an aside, consider that if spirit can be changed into matter, and that material can then be changed to energy, think what might occur if God changed all matter into energy. Imagine every molecule and every atom in the entire universe being changed all at once. What would this look like?

Upon releasing the power contained in the atom, mankind unleashes forces of enormous magnitude. There is a fire ball for miles, a mushroom cloud sent soaring into the air, and a blast so powerful that buildings far from the explosion are leveled as if they were made of cardboard.

If God changed all matter into energy, from His perspective, the entire spiraling universe would appear as one gigantic lake of fire. But, can spirit be destroyed in such a fire? We know that all things are possible to God (Lk. 1:37). Furthermore, from the example of Jesus Christ, we understand that spirit can be changed to matter and that it is possible for such matter to be destroyed.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus Christ was the Word, He was with God, and He was God (Jn. 1:1-5). Yet, Christ was changed from an awesome Spirit being, to a human being composed of matter. Then, as a physical entity, men were allowed to kill Him. Jesus was dead and in the grave for three days and three nights. As the apostle Paul writes:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died** for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3).

The Father raised Christ up from the grave and the grip of death. This was a divine miracle performed as an example for all of us who look to the resurrection as our hope. Thus, Paul writes to the Galatians saying:

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God **the Father, who raised Him from the dead**) (Galatians 1:1).

Christ was raised by the Father (1 Cor. 15:15; Eph. 1:20; 1 Thes. 1:10), but if this miracle had not been performed, Jesus Christ would still be dead. He would be in an unconscious state forever, and we would have no hope of eternal life.

The Fate of the Devil

With the undeniable example of Christ being changed to flesh and then dying, consider Isaiah's description of the devil's fate.

As God speaks of the king of Babylon, the Scriptures again shift to the real power behind the throne—the fallen angel—Lucifer. The prophet records the words of God to say:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into

heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High (Isaiah 14:12-14).

These verses take us back to a time when Lucifer attacked the very throne of God. Motivated by a consuming desire to exalt himself, this wicked angel planned and carried out an assault on heaven. In a massive angelic war, He was thrust back down to the earth. As Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Lk. 10:18). Expelled and cast to earth, he became the adversary of both God and man—ruling the kingdoms of this world as their god (2 Cor. 4:4).

The Almighty allows Satan this latitude in order to accomplish His master plan for mankind. In order for man to live and rule with God in His Kingdom, the Eternal requires that man overcome the influence of human nature. He must resist the pulls of this world, and must also triumph over the influence of this powerful spirit being who broadcasts anger, hostility, and resentment to all who inhabit the earth.

Thus, while Satan’s life will be preserved for a time, the Scriptures repeatedly tell us that his day of reckoning will come. He is now reserved until the time when, like Sodom and Gomorrah, he will be destroyed for all eternity in the massive fire at the end of the age (Jude 1:6-7). The prophet Isaiah validates this truth, as he records God’s personal promise to this wicked being:

Thou shall be brought down to hell; to the sides of the pit (Isaiah 14:15).

Hell is “sheôl”—the grave. In other words, Satan will die! The exact details of how this will occur are not certain, but the evidence suggests that the devil will be changed from spirit to matter before his destruction. As God inspired Isaiah to write about the devil’s end, in the following verses, the Almighty makes an interesting comment about Satan’s appearance during these final fleeting moments of life:

They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, **Is this the man** that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners? (Isaiah 14:16-17)

In the context of the verses surrounding this statement, it is obvious that God is not speaking of the ancient king of Babylon. This heathen king did not shake powerful empires and make the earth tremble like the beast power will at the end of the age. The Babylonian monarch only ruled an area known today as Iraq. He never displayed anything like the power that will be unleashed during the devil’s final attack on Jerusalem prior to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:8-9). Therefore, it is not possible to relate these verses to the king of Babylon. They are speaking of Satan the devil, and they were written to show us that the devil’s ultimate fate is death!

As Romans 6:23 tells us, “The wages of sin is death.” God does not have one law for some, and a different law for others (Heb. 13:8; Mal. 3:6; Ex. 12:49). He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). God’s law applies to everyone—both human and spirit. For this reason the Eternal declares the fate of ALL those who break His law stating:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, 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).

This verse lists the traits of the ungodly. Since Satan is a murderer, a liar and the father of it, (Jn. 8:44), he is the perfect candidate for the second death. Why would the ungodly human beings be subject to God’s final decree of death while Satan and his demons are somehow exempt?

The end result of sin is death, and this fate is not the consequence of man's sin alone. Satan is the original unrepentant sinner. He too is subject to God's law. Death will come upon every being in God's creation who continues in sin, including those in the spirit world.

All of the previous statements in God's word lead to the same conclusion. Spirit can be destroyed. The devil and the fallen angels will perish. However, there is one verse in the Bible that, by only a casual reading, some may erroneously conclude that spirit cannot die.

Understanding Luke 20:36

During Christ's ministry many religious leaders tried to trap Him. In one such case, the Sadducees who did not believe in a resurrection used a scenario based on the system of levirate marriage in an attempt to mock the Savior's teaching.

In this type of marriage, the Old Covenant Scriptures commanded that when a man died, leaving no children, the next living brother was to marry his widow. By this, he would raise up children to her; insuring that she would have descendants to carry on the family name and inherit her estate.

The Sadducees challenged Jesus on this statute. Essentially they said, "We understand that if a woman's husband dies, leaving no children, then her husband's brother is expected to marry her." In that context, they tried to ridicule Christ's teaching, asking Him, "What if that brother died and each succeeding brother died leaving no offspring? To whom would the woman belong when all of them were resurrected?" Jesus answered:

...The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: **Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels**; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:34-36).

Some read these verses and mistakenly concluded that Jesus is saying that the angelic realm, including the wicked angels, cannot die. However, this is not what Jesus actually said. In addition to all of the evidence presented thus far, there are five reasons why this cannot be the case.

(1). Consider that Christ is not making an exact equation in His statement. He is NOT addressing every similarity or difference between the angels and the resurrected saints. Jesus expected his listeners to understand His intended meaning from the context of the dialogue.

For example, Christ states that those in the first resurrection do not marry, but the saints actually do marry. They wed Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb which takes place after their resurrection (Rev. 19:7-9). Thus, Jesus did not mean that the saints will not marry Him. We are expected to understand that Christ only meant that the resurrected saints will no longer marry one another.

In another example, Jesus also says that those who are in the first resurrection will be "equal to angels." However, He did not mean that they will be identical to them. We know from other verses that the saints will be superior in beauty, power, and authority. In fact, those in the first resurrection will ultimately judge angels (Heb. 2:5-12; 1Cor. 6:3).

Thus, it should be absolutely clear. Christ's intended meaning was simply that, in the resurrection, the saints will be like the angels in that they will be composed of spirit and no longer be flesh and blood.

(2). It must also be understood that, when making this comparison, Jesus was not referring to the devil or the wicked angels. In these verses, Christ says nothing of the second death, the lake of fire, or the fate of the wicked.

Other parallel verses clearly show us that when Christ speaks of the resurrected saints being equal to angels, He is only comparing them to the faithful angels who reside in heaven with God. This is made clear in the accounts found in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. These apostles record this very same dialogue, but they write:

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as **the angels of God in heaven** (Matthew 22:30).

For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but **are as the angels which are in heaven** (Mark 12:25).

From these verses, it is clear that Christ makes a comparison between the resurrected saints and the holy righteous angels who will live with them forever in God's Kingdom. He was not speaking of the wicked demons that inhabit the earth or those restrained in Tartaroo—the bottomless pit (2 Pet. 2:4).

(3). In any discussion of a controversial verse in the Bible, the context of the Scriptures is the single most important factor in determining the author's intended meaning. In this case, **the context is levirate marriage and the resurrection—not the fate of the wicked angels!**

Therefore, we understand that the actual point that Jesus wanted His listeners to comprehend was that levirate marriage would no longer apply to those raised in the first resurrection. They would never again experience the tragedy of death and find themselves in a position in which they needed to remarry (Rev. 20:6; Lk. 20:35-36).

(4). Luke could never have recorded these words believing that Jesus meant the wicked angels could not be destroyed. It was Luke who actually wrote of their destruction in earlier verses of this same gospel. For example, he documented the words of the demons as they spoke to Jesus, saying:

Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, *thou* Jesus of Nazareth? **Art thou come to destroy us?** (Luke 4:34)

Further, the author of this gospel understood that God would eventually destroy the spirit of wicked men in the lake of fire. Luke also quotes Jesus as saying:

Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: **Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell;** yea, I say unto you, Fear him (Luke 12:4-5).

From these companion verses, we see the obvious truth. Luke never intended readers to conclude that the wicked angels cannot die. He understood that they would be destroyed and wrote of this reality in his gospel.

(5). A final evidence of this truth is found in the term that Luke uses for the word “die.” This unique word is “apothnēskō” in the Greek, and *The Complete Wordstudy Dictionary of the New Testament* by Zodhiates defines term as:

To die. Literally, to die off, but used with the simplest meaning of to die... **to die a natural death, applied to both men and animals.**

When we consider the meaning of the word used by Luke, it is further evidence that Jesus was NOT saying that the devil and his demons are immortal. Christ's intended meaning was that those in the first resurrection will no longer grow old and **die off** like human beings do.

Angels are not Immortal

We must understand. While it is true that the faithful angels will not grow old and die like physical humans, the angelic community does not have life inherent in them. They are not immortal! The angels existed when Timothy wrote that it is the “Lord of lords, who only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:15-

16). When the resurrection occurs, the faithful saints will put on this divine trait of immortality (1 Cor. 15:53). The Scriptures nowhere state that the angels have, or will ever have, this eternal quality.

God is the Almighty One! He has absolute unlimited power, and therefore, He has the ability to destroy all the wicked just as He has promised:

The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but **all the wicked will he destroy** (Ps. 145:20).

Further, God's compassionate judgment is that the wages of sin is death. It is not living in a state of torturous searing pain forever and ever.

His Mercy Never Fails

When Jesus said that the Father is greater than He, it was not an overstatement. The Father is the embodiment of power, holiness, and love! Perhaps the greatest and most appreciated of His traits is the mercy that comes from His love. As the Psalmist writes:

But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and **plenteous in mercy** and truth (Psalms 86:15).

God is unique. There is none like Him in the sense that He is both moral and merciful. Would such an awesome being that is literally filled with compassion cause any other being to suffer for all eternity because they rejected Him? Would God, who is love, suffer anyone to an everlasting existence of unimaginable pain?

In the context of all we have read, and the loving nature of God, the answer can only be NO! Such a thought flies in the face of God's law in which we are told to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Consider the example of the mercy of Jesus Christ. Our Savior was brutally beaten—even beyond recognition (Isa. 52:14). He was dying in agony as His weight hung on nails pounded through His limbs and into the wooden stake. Blood flowed from the wounds in his body as He suffered the rejection and torment of men. During this tragic and terribly painful experience, Jesus found it nearly impossible to breathe. Still, He used what little breath He could muster to pray and ask the Father to forgive His tormentors.

Jesus Christ was a reflection of God the Father. He literally did on earth as He had seen His Father do in heaven (Jn. 5:30, 8:28, 10:38). He judged righteously, showing love and kindness toward others. Even in the most horrible of circumstances, he continued to show enormous compassion. This multi-faceted act of Christ reveals the essence of God's nature. He is the epitome of mercy. As the Psalmist states:

For the LORD *is* good; **his mercy is everlasting**; and his truth *endureth* to all generations (Psalms 100:5).

O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: because **his mercy endureth for ever** (Psa.118:1).

Psalm 136 also echoes this theme in each and every one of its 26 verses. At the end of every single sentence, it is declared that His mercy will never end. God's mercy exists for all eternity! How could anyone believe that His mercy fails when it comes to Satan and the demons? Such a thought goes against all that we know of His nature.

A Loving God

God's mercy is an extension of His love. In fact, He is more loving than we humans could ever imagine. The phenomenal example of Jesus Christ shows that God is actually willing to endure unimaginable suffering in order to alleviate the pain and death that others deserve. The thought that God would cause those who don't love Him to suffer for all eternity is a horrible absurdity that contradicts the entire Bible. It makes God seem like He is some sort of vindictive tyrant.

Consider this issue from another perspective. We understand that God is not going to punish mankind for all eternity because of our sins. Why would we think He would act differently when it comes to the fate of the fallen angels? The entire thought goes against the many Scriptures that show us the love of God. As John writes:

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is love** (1 John 4:8).

The Almighty God is the embodiment of love, and He wants us to become like He is. For this reason Jesus said:

Ye have heard that it hath been said; Thou shall love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you...Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:43-44, 48).

It is unimaginable to think that God would expect us to love our enemies, to bless them, to do good works toward them, and then He would turn around and act differently toward His enemies! If we grasp anything about God, we should recognize that He is a being of supreme love.

Understanding this, there is no doubt that the merciful fate God has planned for the devil and his demons is to do what is best for them—to end their life and torment—not prolong it. Those who are filled with envy, anger, hatred and hostility are truly unhappy. They will therefore be put out of their misery—not be forced to experience even more unhappiness for all eternity.

Eventually, God will cleanse the entire universe by a massive inferno that will engulf the heavens and earth. Then, He will create a new heavens and new earth in which there will be no evil (2 Pet. 3:13). The devil and his angels will have their part in the lake of fire. This will be the ultimate cleansing of the universe from wickedness and sin. This act is done in love, and in preparation for the wonderful new beginning. As John writes:

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for **the former things are passed away** (Revelation 21:3-4).

There will be no more suffering in that day. There will only be love—love as God defines it. The kind of love that the Father and Christ share will be enjoyed by everyone. There will no longer be a place for selfishness, suffering, pride, pain, hostility, envy, anger, or violence. All that evil, along with the wicked spirits that engender and spread those attitudes, will cease to exist.

This is the Christian's hope, and this is the love and mercy of the Almighty God we serve. This is the kind of love and mercy that, as His children, we are to be growing in as we prepare to be an intrinsic part of that glorious Kingdom to come.

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of free literature designed to help you better understand God's plan for mankind and the destiny of the universe. Booklets that might also interest you include:

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