

The Christian View of Life and Death

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He [the Son] was with God [the Father] in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:1-5)

In the history of our universe, life came first...then death, suffering, and ruin as a consequence of an ancient tragedy. In the original languages, the sixty-six books of God's Word (Bible) repeatedly speak of two kinds of life—*physical* and *spiritual*, as well as two kinds of death—*physical* and *spiritual*.

At the creation, the first man—Adam, like the rest of the universe, was formed from molecular elements. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [spiritual] and man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7) Adam had unique and transcendent attributes of intellect, emotions, and will—*personhood*. This personhood is a reflection [image] of God's similar attributes. Initially, Adam had an intimate and loving relationship with his Creator.

The first mention of *death* comes only ten verses later.

And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16, 17)

Death means separation, not extinction or cessation. Physical death is the separation of the immaterial part of us from our material body. Spiritual death is the separation of man from God, who is the very Source of life. In the physical realm, life precedes death; however, in the spiritual realm the order is reversed--death precedes life.

In the face of God's protective command and his gracious warning of death as the consequences of disobedience, Adam and Eve ate from the one forbidden tree. The first two humans immediately died *spiritually*, where cut off from God, and corruption and decay entered the universe. Years later, they both died physically—physical death being the ultimate result of spiritual death.

After Adam & Eve died spiritually, but before they died physically, Adam “had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.” (Genesis 5:3) Seth inherited his father Adam's nature; he was born physically alive, but spiritually dead unto God. And such was the historical consequence for the entire human race. Yes, each and every one of us enters the world with physical life, but are spiritually dead and alienated from the Creator.

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

Now the Bible sets forth two possible outcomes for individuals physically alive, but spiritually dead.

1. Jesus said, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit [God] gives birth to spirit...you must be born again.” “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 3:5-7; 5:24) Further Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6)
2. Sadly, those who die physically without being “born again” are thus ‘twice dead’, and are said to spend an eternity separated from the presence of God. These become partakers in the “second death.” (Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; & 21:8)

The Christian view of life and death ends on this bright and hopeful note.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them...and God 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. (Revelation 21:1-4)