



2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 10 Spiritualism Exposed

by Tim Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

Come And Reason – South Africa has also created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group at: <https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoMIMDc0>

New Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available. If you have a US Postal address and would like some to share, just email your requests to Requests@ComeandReason.com and we will send them at no cost.

MAGAZINE: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ, is now available!
<https://comeandreason.com/lie-that-deceived-angels/>

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.



SABBATH

What comes to mind from the lesson title? Let's define spiritualism and then explore why God warns against it and how we can protect ourselves from it.

Spiritualism, in all its forms, whether communing with the dead—seances, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, or other forms of spiritualism such as crystal balls, reading tea leaves, palm reading, astrology, or communing directly with demons—satanic occult worship, or spiritualism that is dressed up in Christian language and given Christian labels—all if it has one common root: *The pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason!*

And the result of spiritualism—despite its desire to gain knowledge is actually the damaging of minds, the rejection of facts, evidence, and truth, the diminishment of discernment, the undermining of reason, the belief in the irrational, fantastical, and superstitious.

Consider:

- Eve at the Tree of Knowledge—she is confronted with the miracle of a talking serpent, something that wowed the senses and astonished the understanding, and then she was tempted to gain knowledge without investigating the evidence for herself and using her reason to examine all the facts and truths of the situation that God had previously provided.
- King Saul sought out the witch of Endor because he wanted knowledge
- Why do people go to fortune tellers?
- Why do people read horoscopes?

How much truth does Satan have on his side? How much truth is on God's side?

So, if Satan is to succeed, what is an essential strategy that he must employ to get people to follow him? The denial, devaluing, undermining, sidelining of the truth, a willingness to believe based on something other than truth—so spiritualism in its fullest definition includes all the strategies and methods of demons to divert minds away from truth and accept lies and falsehoods, this can be:

- False signs, wonders, and miracles
- Emotionalism, activities designed to stir emotions and make one susceptible to suggestion or replace evidence, truth, and facts with emotional experiences, such as praying long and hard until the feelings change while ignoring the truth that God has given.
- Various mind-altering substances designed to interfere with reason and understanding and create false experiences like hallucinogens (perhaps why in Revelation 9:21 and 18:23 the Bible describes the wicked using sorceries in the KJV and magic in the NIV version and the Greek translated as sorceries or magic is *pharmakeia*. Sadly, some have interpreted this to mean all medicine, it does not, it means the various potions and substances concocted by shaman, witches, magic men and others to cause altered states of reality in order to deceive and alter the mind's ability to tell fantasy from reality. If we were treating a disease state such as schizophrenia that causes hallucinations and delusions with medication that restored

reason and clear thinking this would not be the *pharmakeia* or magic of the wicked, but moving minds back to God's design and restoring the ability to discern truth from fiction or falsehood.

- Mystical practices designed to awe, shock, and suspend investigation of evidence and the use of critical reasoning, many religions of the world use pomp, ceremony, ritual, smoke and mirrors, incredible edifices, all designed to suspend thinking and create a wondering mind that is susceptible to molding and shaping
- Authority of office, believe because the person in charge said so—this is the way the beast of Revelation works—and is a form of spiritualism, of deceiving and seducing minds, by declaration, claim, proclamation, rule that is contrary to truth, God's methods and principles, seeking to get people to surrender their minds to another person.

Consider this historical quote about Jesus' method, from the book *The Desire of Ages*, do you agree with the application and method described from the facts of Jesus' life?

- The King of glory stooped low to take humanity. Rude and forbidding were His earthly surroundings. **His glory was veiled**, that the **majesty** of His outward form **might not become an object of attraction. He shunned all outward display.** Riches, worldly honor, and human greatness can never save a soul from death; **Jesus purposed that no attraction of an earthly nature should call men to His side. Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw those who would follow Him.** The character of the Messiah had long been foretold in prophecy, and **He desired men to accept Him upon the testimony of the word of God.** (*Desire of Ages* 43, emphasis mine).

It is clear Jesus did in fact use the method of avoiding the pomp, circumstance, wealth, position, family connections, or other elements of earthly power and advanced truth, not just fact truth, but truth lived out in a righteous, sinless, life that embodied the living law of love.

Why does God use this method? God is all powerful; He could out-duel Satan in a battle of signs and wonders so easily. God could perform bigger and better miracles and could easily demonstrate more power than Satan without ever resorting to direct violence to harm Satan—why doesn't God use this method?

And this question connects to last week's lesson and the true purpose of why God created the Sabbath as a gift for us and why we are to remember it.

The reason God doesn't use such methods is because He cannot get what He wants if He used such methods—and what does God want? What is God's desired outcome from this conflict with Satan? Is God's desire only to eliminate sin from the universe? God could do that by wiping out all intelligent life—but then what? What does God want? He wants to eliminate sin while winning His intelligent creatures to love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship, faithfulness, understanding. Can God achieve this outcome, winning people to genuine love, trust, and friendship by the use of might and power, even if it is only miracle working might and power? Or does increasing the display of might

and power intimidate, awe, shock, and shut down understanding and lead to mindless obedience based on fear?

That is why the Bible teaches “not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6).

And the Sabbath was given as a gift to humanity when God RESTED, when God stopped using power, when God stepped back and created a time for free thinking and contemplation, when God’s character of love, truth, and freedom was revealed in action and deed by the creation of this blessed day.

Understand, if God were like Satan alleges, if God’s law functioned like Satan’s kingdoms, the kingdoms of this world—made up rules that require infliction of punishment—there would be no weekly Sabbath; there would be no true freedom. God would have demonstrated His power, recited the rules, and then given people a choice, conform or be punished. But the Sabbath proves God’s laws are design laws and that love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. And God gave us this gift because in His foreknowledge He knew we needed to remember all week long the truth about God, His character, His methods, His design laws and live them out all week long because in this world, the natural sinful heart believes the highest form of justice is law and law enforcement. The Sabbath calls us to a higher standard of reality—to Creator worship whose laws are design laws.

So, Satan, the great deceiver has a multiple forms of spiritualism, tricks to divert the minds of people away from the truth, to get them to stop reasoning and thinking. Our responsibility is to reject all such methods and practices and exercise our God given reasoning powers to be lovers of the truth and grow in truth every day in our relationship with God so that, as Paul wrote, we are fully persuaded in our own minds and have become mature people who can discern the right from the wrong.

Read first paragraph,

- Decades ago, stories surfaced about near death experiences (NDEs), in which people who died and were then revived gave incredible accounts of what they had seen and heard while “dead.” Millions now believe that these accounts are evidence that the dead are not really dead. This foundational belief of spiritualism is one of Satan’s most widespread and effective deceptions. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 80).

Many people believe Near Death Experiences (NDE) preview to what happens when a person dies. Most NDEs have a common theme, a narrow corridor or narrowing of the world, an approaching bright light, a person representing someone from the other side and a line, from which there is no return, if crossed. These events are typically described as peaceful, transcendent, beautiful, and euphoric. Reports of NDE experiences go back almost 2000 years and are reported by approximately 20% of people who suffer a heart attack and are revived.

Interestingly, however, a person does not have to be near death to experience a NDE. A 1990 study at the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center in Charlottesville of 58 people who had experienced NDEs found that half would have survived without medical care. Something as innocuous as fainting can produce an NDE.

There are many theories about the cause of NDEs to include hypoxia (lack of oxygen to the brain), which could trigger seizures in the temporal lobes and cause the symptoms of NDE, hypotension (loss of blood pressure to the brain), endorphin and enkephalin (brain produced mood elevators and pain killers) release, drugs injected during resuscitation, low blood sugar and other metabolic processes.

Kevin Nelson, a neuropsychologist at the University of Kentucky, has done research into NDEs and offered another reasonable explanation. NDEs are a form of sleep disorder called REM intrusion in which dreams occur in a non-sleep state. During this time a person is awake but paralyzed, may experience the sensation of floating, will have vivid dreams that would be experienced more like a hallucination and have out of body experiences. All of this will be remembered quite vividly after the event is over with a sense of conviction to the veracity of the experience.

A study published in 1994 by Thomas Lempert, then at the Rudolph Virchow Clinic in Berlin, Germany, documented how volunteers made themselves faint through a combination of hyperventilating, standing, and breath-holding. Many of them experienced euphoric NDE-like sensations such as floating out of their body, entering another world, or encountering supernatural beings. This is thought to be due to activating the vagus nerve which stimulates the brainstem to cause these NDEs. This would explain the high occurrence of NDE in people being resuscitated from a heart attack as vagal nerve stimulation occurs during this process.

The Bible is silent on near death experiences. But what is interesting is that the entire idea that the dead can communicate to us, or that we continue to be aware and conscious after death based on near death experiences is all **based on an obvious lie that everyone ignores**—and it is stated right in the name of the events—what is the lie?

The people having **near** death experiences are NOT dead! They may be **near** death, but they are **not dead**. And therefore what they are experiencing are the experiences of a living being, not a dead being, so the only rational and accurate conclusion is that these are experiences of living beings and cannot shed light on what the dead may or may not experience, because in fact, the people are not dead.

The reason people believe these NDEs are insights into what happens at death is because they believe other lies, such as what death actually is. Some people think that death when the heart stops beating. I have had patients tell me they died and were revived because their hear stopped beating and they were resuscitated. But the heart stopping beating is not death. Many people have had their heart stop beating, in fact many people have had their hearts removed and another person's heart implanted and those people are not dead.

True and actual death (what the Bible calls first death) is necrosis; it is not cessation of the normal function of a bodily organ for a brief period of time, it is the necrosis of the body as a whole and most particularly the brain. This is what happened to Lazarus and why Jesus waited 3 days to go resurrect him. He wanted there to be no doubt that Lazarus was dead, and Martha's words are so helpful. When Jesus said to roll away the stone, she warned that it would stink because the body had begun to decay. That is death.

These near-death experiences are happening to people BEFORE they die, while they are still alive, and therefore to conclude anything happening to the living is evidence of what the dead experience is factually wrong and a method to deceive. But do you see how deeply lies have become imbedded into people's thinking that this very obvious and simple truth is denied?

Putting this obvious truth together what the Bible reveals about what the dead know and what do we learn? What stories are recorded from Lazarus after his resurrection? None, why? Because the Bible tells us the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5,6). In fact, in 100% of the cases in the Bible where a person died and was resurrected the Bible records nothing from them of their experience while dead.

Further the Bible warns against consulting those who claim to be able to communicate with the dead, for they are actually communicating with demons—fallen angels who are impersonating the dead.

- When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 18:9-13 NIV84).

So, if we are using our reasoning ability, and we are also using the evidence we have, we must conclude that there is no evidence that near death experiences provide any information on what the dead know or experience.

Read the second paragraph,

- In fact, spiritualism began back in Eden with the serpent's lie to Eve, "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4, NKJV). This idea also lay at the root of one of the greatest spurious religious movements of the nineteenth century with the Fox sisters' claim, later admitted to be fraudulent, that they could receive answers to their questions from spirits of the dead. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 80).

In Genesis, before sin, we have God telling Adam and Eve that if they should break trust with Him and eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would die. We have Satan telling Eve that she will not die. Who is telling the truth?

Why then do most Christians teach that Satan was telling the truth, that people continue to live in some form or another regardless of whether they are righteous or wicked if God said that if they sin they would die?

Because there is an underlying premise that is believed by many, it comes out of paganism and it along with the imposed law lie infected Christianity, and that lie is that when God created Adam and Eve He created them with some part of their being that is immortal, their spirit or their soul is believed to be immortal, so that it is believed that when God said they would die He meant only their body would die, but that their spirit or soul would live on eternally either in heaven if they partake of salvation or in the torments of hell if they are not saved.

But it is an assumption without evidence that God created humans with some part of them that is immortal. What are the problems if we conclude humans were given immortality in Eden?

First, this believe is a direct attack on the character of God, whether people realize it or not. What does it say about God if we believe that He created Adam and Eve with immortality?

- Either God doesn't have foreknowledge, or He is naïve, or He is malicious and sadistic, why?
- Consider, what does it say about God if Adam and Eve were created with immortality and sinned and also have the ability to procreate children and pass along both immortality and their sin-condition? In other words, what would it say about the Creator if He created them with the ability to create beings in their image and they sin and then have children who have immortal souls but are born into sin not by their own choice but Adam and Eve's, and some of those children live only a few years and never have the gospel presented to them and then die bodily, but have their "immortal souls" tormented in the fires of hell for all eternity?
- If this is true then what kind of God must God be? Either He doesn't know the future—and is also naïve—"Well I never thought that could happen, boy, sure caught me off guard there," or He is sadistic and malicious, "Yeah, I knew billions of people would never choose salvation, but I created them in such a way that they will be tormented for all eternity despite them never having a choice to avoid it."

No, the doctrine of natural immortality of the soul is a lie, it is demonic, it is designed to create distrust in God and undermine the truth about God's character. But we don't have to conclude this based only on our ability to reason out the implications of such a doctrine—the Bible is quite specific on this.

Evidence from Scripture that immortality is not possessed by humans, but a gift of God to the righteous:

- After God drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen 3:24
 - Why bar the way to the tree of life if they were already immortal?
 - How is barring the way to the tree of life an act of mercy, not a punishment for sin? Because it prevented there from being immortal sinners. Living in sin without the hope of healing and salvation is not happiness, it is torment and God will not allow this.
- "God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:15,16).

- “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)
- “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)
- “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:8).

Could anyone really have happiness in heaven, have all tears wiped away as is promised in Revelation—if for all eternity future we hear the wails, cries, suffering, and torment of our unsaved loved ones?

Think about it, what happens in the hearts of any righteous person when they hear an animal crying in pain? How much more when we hear people being tormented? Can you think of anything more demonic, more intended to turn hearts away from love and trust in God, than the belief that heaven will be a place where the righteous are happy **while their loved ones are being tormented for all eternity by God**? It is a lie!

God would save every lost soul if He could, but He cannot force people to love Him, and to force those who prefer lies to truth, who have hardened themselves in selfishness, who prefer evil to righteousness, exploitation to selfless service, villainy to nobility into His unveiled glorious presence where the fires of infinite truth and love burn freely would be torment to them. Thus, He gives them freedom to choose what they desire. And when He unveils His life-giving glory, and the righteous are transformed, and radiate those fires of truth and love from their being, like Moses on the mountain, or Moses and Elijah at transfiguration, the wicked beg for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from love and truth. They would rather not exist than to live in purity, in holiness, in righteousness. So God grants them their choice, in harmony with His character of truth, love, and freedom—He sets them free to reap what they insist upon, complete and eternal separation from Him the source of life and they die eternally. Thus the punishment from sin is reaped from sin, and that punishment is eternal, but the punishing, the torment, the suffering is not eternal as the wicked are gone for all eternity. The memory of them is not gone, the righteous will remember for all eternity the choice of the wicked, the actions of God, and the reality of God’s character and government and recognize how God longed to save these people, but love cannot be forced, and that the only just and merciful action God can take, that is in complete harmony with His character and design laws is to set them free to reap what they have sown into their own characters.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Witchcraft is demonic. It seduces people into false worship and counterfeits a genuine relationship with God, but it can never satisfy the deepest needs of the heart. Spiritualism is at the heart of Satan’s plan to take the world captive. But Jesus, by His grace and power, sets

captives free from the chains of evil that bind them. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 81).

What is witchcraft? What is the power of witches, sorcerers, warlocks, witch doctors, and shamans?

Their power is the ability to deceive and seduce minds into believing lies, to get people to surrender thinking, to believe things that are not true, that contradict reality, and they use a variety of methods, signs, wonders, tricks, slight-of-hand, sometimes working with demons (fallen angels) to perform miracles or signs and wonders. But the goal is to seduce minds into believing things that are not true, to suspend reason, and to surrender decision-making to some other power than a noble, God-inspired, self-governance—the last fruit of the Spirit.

Examples:

- King Saul visited the witch of Endor. Saul had already been given immense amount of truth to know this was all a fraud, a con, a lie, not from God but from the evil one—yet Saul rejected all of this truth which, had he applied it to his life would have protected him from the deception he accepted because he would have never gone and listened to the witch in the first place. When visiting the witch he already believed a lie before he got there, that the witch was able to provide him knowledge without the use of reason or actual evidence. He believed the witch could conjure up Samuel’s disembodied spirit and get counsel from Samuel. What Saul experienced was a fallen angel, commonly known as a demon, impersonating Samuel, and that demon lied to Saul and gave him a report designed to discourage and frighten Saul, which it did and led to Saul’s poor choice and ultimately the taking his own life by suicide. Multiple layers of lies in this experience designed to seduce the senses and confuse the mind and discourage the spirit leading to hopelessness and surrender.
- All the forms of pagan worship in Scripture that seduce the senses and impair thinking with the rituals, sensual passions, fertility rights, intoxicating substances and superstitious irrational beliefs. Paul addresses this in Romans 14 speaking about foods offered to idols. The weak in faith, those who don’t understand reality, believe that if they eat food offered to an idol then that idol will have some power over them. The problem is not in the food, or its being offered to the idol, but in the lie that a piece of stone or wood could have some power over them, the danger is in the fear-based superstitious belief. The mature in faith know it is non-sense and can eat anything without fear, but the immature cannot, not until they grow up and understand the truth. This is how demons work, they work through various falsehoods to inflame fear, diminish reasoning abilities, and get people trapped in false, fantastical, superstitious, irrational belief systems—including many things taught in Christianity.
- People going to seances or using Ouija boards, horoscopes or other spiritualistic activities etc. The people doing these activities already believe multiple lies, that the dead can communicate with us; that these devices have some ability to connect to another realm; that there is no God or there are no demons; or that witchcraft and the occult is just an innocent game; and they suspend reason, suspend the investigation of evidence and surrender their minds to what they see and hear from these sources.

- Speaking in tongues—receiving a message from what some believe to be supernatural sources that they cannot understand for themselves and is accepted as truth without investigating the evidence, comparing with Scripture, and reasoning for self.
- Praying for the burning bosom instead of using reason and investigating the evidence in Scripture, science/nature, and experience. In other words, replacing truth with feelings.

Any modern examples of warlocks or witches working in society today—and remember their power is to get people to suspend reason, believe on some authority, claim, proclamation that denies evidence, denies reality, and promotes a message that is directly contrary to Scripture and the truth God has revealed?

- All those world leaders who keep calling people to re-image reality. In other words, they are telling people to replace reality with imagination, with make-believe, with pretend, with what is not true, with fantasy, with myth, with cunningly devised fables.
- Examples of this include the promoters of the lie that there is no male and female—and let me be clear here. I am not speaking about people who suffer from some identity problem, people with real mental or physical conditions that cause them distress and who need our love and compassion and help. I am speaking of people who deny reality, and twist the truth. The truth is there are real people who are confused, who are struggling, but rather than seeking to help these people, the deceivers in society instead exploit this vulnerable group to create and promote the lie that there is no male and female, that gender is just a made up idea. It is demonic, it is spiritualistic, it is designed to get people to suspend reasoning and to accept claims that deny reality, and to deny the truth that God has revealed to us. For the Bible is clear, God made them male and female. Again just as in the NDE which in their name tell you it is not death, but near death, meaning the people are still alive and thus cannot tell us about death, but this obvious fact is denied and ignored to embrace the lie. So too in the trans-gender movement the name also reveals the lie. Consider, can you take a trans-continental flight if there are no continents? You can't be trans-gendered if there are no male and female. And male and female is not defined by how one feels but by objective physical facts, just like someone in America may feel like they are in Europe, but that feeling doesn't change reality. And while we can move a person from one continent to another, we cannot change North America into Europe—likewise a male can never become a female or vice versa. But minds can definitely be confused and we need to help people who are confused, just as we seek to help people who are confused about where they are.
- The promoters of the Green movement, and the lies related to climate change—all demonic lies that specifically deny the truth of God's Word, when God promised that the climate and seasons would continue until the Earth is destroyed at the second coming and then remade anew at the third coming.
- Those who promote the lie that God's government works like human governments and that God's law is imposed made up rules and justice is the infliction of punishment and obedience to God is blind obedience to voices in position of authority. This is fantasy; it is falsehood; it is not reality in God's universe; it is, in fact, demonic.

MONDAY & TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on what the Bible teaches us about death. Is death a punishment inflicted by God for sin, or is it a natural consequence of sin when God stops using power to hold it at bay?

The problem is that the term death is used in Scripture to describe two different states: first death describes the death that both the righteous and wicked experience and is described in Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, as a sleep, a state of suspended animation in which the person is unaware of what is transpiring?

Human beings are created by God and have three components, body, soul, spirit.

- Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NET, emphasis mine).

Interestingly, computers are also tripartite and serve as a poignant object lesson. In order to have an **operational computer**, one needs **hardware**, **software**, and an **energy source**. Having only one or two of these three will result in a computer that will not operate. All three are required for actual functioning.

In a similar way, to have an **operational** (functioning) **human being**, it requires all three components—**body**, **soul**, and **spirit**:

- The Greek word for **body** is σῶμα [*soma*] and is analogous to a computer’s **hardware**, **including the CPU**—the physical machine, including our brain.
- The Greek word for **soul** is ψυχή [*psuche*], from which we get psyche, as in *psychiatry* and *psychology*, and it means our individuality—our heart, unique personhood, character, identity. It is analogous to a computer’s **software** (including database/datasets/data).
- And the Greek word for **spirit** is πνεῦμα [*pneuma*], from which we get pneumonia or pneumatic, and it means wind, air, or breath—as in the breath of life. This is our **energy source**—the life-energy originating from God.

When a computer runs out of power, what state does it go into? It “sleeps.” This is exactly how the Bible describes those who die the first death: they “sleep,” awaiting the resurrection (Psalm 7:5, 13:3; Matthew 9:24; John 11:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). With this in mind, we can now answer what actually happens to the various components of a human being at death.

At the first death:

- The body returns to dust (Genesis 3:19, Psalm 44:25, Ecclesiastes 3:20);
- The spirit—life energy—returns to God who gave the breath of life (Ecclesiastes 12:7);
- But what about the soul (*psuche/psyche*)—the individuality, the software? Where does that go?

If someone stole your laptop and was threatening to destroy it but you had a perfect copy of the data backed up on a cloud server, then you might say, “I’m not afraid of the one who can destroy my laptop (hardware/body/soma) but cannot destroy the software [soul/*psuche*].” This is like what Jesus described in Matthew 10:28 when He spoke about those who might kill us for our faith in Him.

Why is it that the killing of the body cannot destroy the soul? Because the soul is our individuality, our unique personhood, and it is distinct from the body. The question is, *where does the soul go when it is absent from the body?* The apostle Paul answers:

- Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be **absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord** (2 Corinthians 5:6–8 KJV).

But where would our souls/individualities/software be stored in heaven? Would it not be in the heavenly records—the Lamb’s Book of Life (“servers”), where our *names/characters* are recorded? If someone destroyed your laptop but your data was safe on a cloud server, the data would not be active and operational but dormant—awaiting download to new hardware. Likewise, when our bodies die and decay to dust, the breath of life returns to God, and our souls/individualities are safely stored on the heavenly “servers” in the presence of the Lord, in what state are they? They are asleep/dormant/in stasis, awaiting download into new bodies (hardware) at the resurrection.

Paul brilliantly describes this very process:

- Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him**. The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 NIV84).

Did you notice that the very same righteous dead who arise out of the ground are also coming down out of heaven with Christ—and that they are described as coming from heaven in a state of sleep? How can this be? Because their souls/individualities/software, which are stored on the heavenly “servers,” are coming down with Christ to be downloaded into their new immortal bodies during the resurrection at the second coming! Jesus, the Builder of our tripartite beings, understood this, proclaiming:

- I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die (John 11; 25, 26 NIV84).

The righteous may *sleep*, but they never *die*. Their individualities are safe with Christ in heaven!

But the Bible says:

- “For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction**” (Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- “**Sin**, when it is full-grown, **gives birth to death**” (James 1:15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

These texts seem to make it clear that death is the direct result of sin, not an infliction by God, and the Bible says elsewhere that the power of death is Satan’s power, not God’s:

- “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**” (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The power of death is the devil’s power and that God does not inflict death as punishment for sin, then what do we do with texts like this one?

- “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand” (Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84).

Is the Bible contradicting itself? Does God use Satan’s power? Is God the source of life and death? Is death inflicted by God?

It all depends on how we understand God’s law functions, if we understand God’s law is imposed rules then we falsely believe God is the source of death inflicted as punishment.

But when we return to design law, understanding that God is Creator and all His laws are the protocols that He built reality and life to operate upon—like the laws of physics, health, and the moral laws—then we realize that God is not the source of death, but that death is the result of breaking away from God and His design protocols for life, like breaking the law of respiration by tying a plastic bag over one’s head.

Then what do we do with Deuteronomy 32:39? We cannot ignore this text, so how do we understand it?

As we do with all Scripture, we place it in the setting of the entire inspired record, the setting of the Great Controversy, and we do not form our understanding only on one text. And with just a little more Bible searching, we find this clarifying text:

- “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up” (1 Samuel 2:6 NIV84).

In this passage, we can see the answer through Hebrew parallelism, in which the second phrase expands upon the first—and what do we learn? That God is in control of what the Bible calls the first death, not the second death; that God causes the first death but not the second death and that He will raise people from the first-death experience.

As the great Reformer Martin Luther wrote, “It is enough for us to know that souls do not leave their bodies to be threatened by the torments and punishments of hell, but enter a prepared bedchamber in which they sleep in peace” (Weimarer Ausgabe, 43, 360, 21–23 (to Genesis 25:7–10); also Exegetica opera latina, Vol 5–6 1833 p. 120 and the English translation: Luther’s Works, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: CPH), 4:313).

The first death is not the end of life; it is a pause in one’s life—the life will continue at the resurrection.

The second death is the death that is the “wages of sin” death (Romans 6:23); it is the death in which both body and soul are destroyed. This death does not happen to anyone until *after* the judgment—after the second resurrection at the end of the 1,000 years. This is the death that occurs when one is completely and permanently cut off from God, who is the source of life. And the second death has no power over the righteous, only the wicked (Revelation 2:11; 20:6).

Understanding these two types of death allows us to understand Deuteronomy 32:39 and 1 Samuel 2:6 and how the devil, not God, holds the power of death.

God is the source of the first death—the sleep-death, which is an artificial state of suspended animation instigated and caused by God’s grace to limit the destructiveness of sin and to allow time for the plan of salvation to be carried out. If not for God’s grace in suspending for a time the ultimate consequences of sin (second death), there would be no first death, only the second death. But the Bible tells us that God in “his forbearance had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Romans 3:25 NIV84). God intervened to create this artificial state of sleep-death so that Jesus’ mission to come and overcome as our substitutionary Savior could be accomplished.

Thus, the Bible rightly tells us that God is in control of the sleep-death, and it is God’s power to bring this sleep-death and to awaken people from it. But the sleep-death is not the death that is the wages of sin! The death that is the wages of sin is the death that Satan causes—and which Jesus came to destroy:

- “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26 NIV84).
- “Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84).

So, we have two deaths described in Scripture. The first death, the sleep-death, which is not death at all but a period of suspended animation in which a person awaits resurrection, is the artificial state of grace controlled by God for the purpose of saving humanity from sin.

But the second death, eternal death, which is a state of annihilation and from which there is no resurrection, is not from God—it is the result of unremedied sin and is the fruit of Satan’s power to alienate people from God, the source of life.

And the second death occurs not when God uses power to inflict it, but when He stops using His power to prevent it. In other words, God has been using power to hold at bay what sin does, but in the final end, God “lets go” and surrenders the persistently rebellious to reap the full consequences of what they have insisted upon, separation from Him, the source of life, and they die eternally. Just as Galatians says: “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction” (6:8 NIV84).

God is the source of life; Satan and sin are the source of death!

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- The devil will use “signs and wonders” and spectacular miracles to deceive multitudes just before the coming of Jesus. Commenting on the deceptive power of demonic spirits, Ángel Rodríguez makes this telling statement: “Their power of persuasion is to be found not in the content of their message but in the power of supernatural manifestations called ‘signs’ or ‘miracles.’ They perform/do (poieō) signs, thus appealing to the affective side of human beings rather than to their discretionary and rational abilities. The fact that these signs are performed by demons shows that the unifying force of the message of the three demons [dragon, beast, and false prophet] is spiritualistic in nature—God is not their source or origin. As the cosmic conflict approaches its closure, demonic power will enter the arena of human history in an unprecedented way. Spiritualism, whose very foundation is the non-biblical teaching of the immortality of the soul, will nearly take the world captive.”—“The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels’ Messages,” unpublished manuscript, p. 6. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 84).

What is spiritualism? The pursuit of knowledge without the investigation of evidence or the use of reason. And what are the three demonic forces foretold in Revelation? The dragon, beast, and false prophet—and what do these descriptors represent about the powers of spiritualism, the power to deceive? They all deceive, so they all use lies, but they do so with different approaches or methods.

- The dragon—that ancient serpent—uses signs, wonders, miracles, magic.

- The beast—uses imposed laws, rules, authority of office—we saw this during COVID when Fauci used his office to declare things to be true that were in fact known to be false, and then used the power of the state to induce or punish to get compliance with the falsehood.
- False prophet—false doctrines, claims, proclamations with false theologies, lies specifically about God, God’s methods, and God’s law—in other words, it is righteous, moral, and good to use power to punish people because that is what God does, that is God’s justice and sometimes one has to kill, so wars are justifiable, and therefore we can go on crusades to kill in order to advance righteousness.
 - This happens in the church when religious leaders appeal to their office, the religious leaders in Christ’s day did this repeatedly, accusing the common people of being uneducated and asking them if any of the leading theology professors believe in Jesus? Threatening people from worship services or membership, and we see this today being practiced by organized churches.