

BIBLICAL TRUTH ABOUT MAN, SIN, AND SALVATION

Lesson 12: Sin's Judgment

This is the fifth of six lessons on the biblical doctrine of sin (hamartiology, from Greek *hamartia*, sin).

Lesson 12 – Central Truth Q and A

Question: Why does sin bring death?

Answer: Death is the judgment of a holy and just God on sinners.

Lesson 12 – Memory Verses

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Ephesians 2:1-2 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*

Lesson 12 – Outline

Death follows sin like night follows day. The ultimate consequence of human sin is death: spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. Each kind of death is the righteous judgment of God for rebellion against Him. Death involves separation. Spiritual death is spiritual separation (alienation) from God. Physical death is separation of the spirit from the body. Eternal death is separation of the soul from God eternally in Hell. When God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He warned Adam that he would “surely die” if he disobeyed (Genesis 2:17). Sin always results in death, because “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

1. Sin Brought Spiritual Death at the Fall

When Adam and Eve sinned, they did not die physically at that moment. By grace, God allowed Adam to live physically for 930 years; however, Adam and Eve died spiritually the instant they ate the forbidden fruit. Spiritual death is a state of enmity and alienation against God. All people who are descendants of Adam and Eve are born spiritually dead in sin and transgression (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:1, 5). In this state of spiritual death, all sinners are unresponsive to spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:4). Like a dead corpse is unresponsive to external stimuli (sight, sound, taste, touch), so every sinner is darkened in understanding and blind to the light of the gospel (Eph. 4:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:4). Sinners are openly hostile to God in their unredeemed state and they are unable to please God (Rom. 8:7-8). Because they are spiritually dead, all sinners need a spiritual resurrection or new birth (Eph. 2:4-5). All sinners must be born again to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3). They must become new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

2. Sin Brings Physical Death when God Wills

The second consequence of sin that happened at the Fall was physical death. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body. Without the life-giving presence of the spirit, the body decays in the ground or some other resting place, just as God told Adam, “to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). The spirit (soul) then enters the judgment of God: “It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Although Adam did not die instantly when he sinned, the process of physical death began the moment he sinned. All people experience the effects of aging, disease, and pain until the moment of physical death. No one has control over the time of his birth or death. God sovereignly determines the day of birth and death, as Psalm 31:15 says, “My times are in thy hand.” Every human being (with the exception of Enoch and Elijah) has physically died. Genesis 5 stresses this reality by repeating the phrase “and he died” over and over again. Apart from salvation in Christ, physical death is a cause of fear that keeps men subject to lifelong bondage (Hebrews 2:15). But in Christ, physical death is no longer to be feared. For the Christian, physical death is a departure of the soul from the body and to be in the presence of the Lord (Phil. 2:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8).

3. Sin Brings Eternal Death at the Judgment

Eternal death is what follows the final judgment of unbelievers. Eternal death is called “the second death” and it is a permanent state of torment in “the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:6, 11-15). Christ described the reality of eternal death as “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41). Hell is not annihilation or cessation of existence. It is the suffering of everlasting torment without any hope of escape or mercy. Just as God will raise the bodies of His redeemed people and give them glorified bodies that are fit for life in heaven (1 Cor. 15), so God will also raise the bodies of condemned sinners and give them bodies that are fit to endure the torments of the lake of fire forever. This eternal death is appointed for all people who die physically while also being dead spiritually without Christ. It is therefore the urgent duty of all sinners to flee from the wrath to come by repenting of their sins and trusting Christ as Lord and Savior. Although sinners deserve death and eternal punishment, Christ will freely give them the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

Summary of Sin’s Judgment (Death)

God’s judgment on sin involves three kinds of death: spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death.

- A. Spiritual death – separation of the soul from God
- B. Physical death – separation of the soul from the body
- C. Eternal death – separation of the soul and body from God forever

The remedy for spiritual death is regeneration (new birth). The remedy for physical death is resurrection in Christ. There is no remedy for eternal death.