

What is death in the Bible



Many ask what is death in the Bible.

According with the Bible, as the separation of the soul from the body is the death of the body, so the separation of God from the soul is the death of the soul. And this death of the soul is the true death.

This is made clear by the commandment given in paradise, when God said to Adam, 'On whatever day you eat from the forbidden tree you will certainly die' (cf. Gen. 2:17). And it was indeed Adam's soul that died by becoming through his transgression separated from God; for bodily he continued to live after that time, even for nine hundred and thirty years (cf. Gen. 5:5).

The death, however, that befell the soul because of the transgression not only crippled the soul and made man accursed; it also rendered the body itself subject to fatigue, suffering and corruptibility, and finally handed it over to death.

For it was after the dying of his inner self brought about by the transgression that the earthly Adam heard the words, 'Earth will be cursed because of what you do, it will produce thorns and thistles for you; through the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread until you return to the earth from which you were taken: for you are

earth, and to earth you will return' (Gen. 3:17-19).

St Paul says, 'If you live in accordance with your fallen self, you will die, but if through the Spirit you extirpate the evil actions of your fallen self, you will live' (Rom. 8:13). Here he speaks of life and death in the age to be: life is the enjoyment of the everlasting kingdom, death age-long chastisement.

Thus the violation of God's commandment is the cause of all types of death, both of soul and body, whether in the present life or in that endless chastisement. And death, properly speaking, is this: for the soul to be unharnessed from divine grace and to be yoked to sin.

As the death of the soul is authentic death, so the life of the soul is authentic life. Life of the soul is union with God, as life of the body is its union with the soul.

Based on Saint Gregory Palamas

In the photo, a candid shot from a funeral service, Vatopedi monastery, Mount Athos



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