

Life is eternal in Christ

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Life is eternal in Christ. Jesus says, “Those who believe in the Son of Man have the eternal Life”. Syrian Orthodox Church believes that life is eternal in Christ. The short period of life in this earth is a part of the long span of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Here is an attempt to explain the historical and biblical understanding about the life, death and resurrection of mankind.

What was the situation of man when he was created by God?

When God created Adam and Eve, God created them in His likeness and image. The Syrian church fathers interpreted this likeness and image as the state of immortality and the power of co-creation. When God created Adam like God, he was immortal. Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:19-20 present man both as created from the dust of the earth and as after the image and likeness of God. God also has entrusted man the stewardship of the earth. Therefore patristic tradition sees in man a microcosm of the universe, encompassing both the spiritual and material aspects of creation. When man worships God, his worship is two fold -spiritual and physical. In this act, man joins the angels and all spiritual creations in the never-ending liturgy of eternal worship since he too is a spiritual being. As partaker and steward of physical creation, man worships on behalf of the physical universe, joining the cosmos in the proclamation of the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-4). What then is a better instrument for God's worship than the voice of the one who represents all creation? For this reason the Orthodox Church worships God using human voice as its sole musical instrument.

When death comes to the world?

When Adam disobeyed the commandment of the Lord, he was set apart from the fellowship of God. He was not able to worship God after having the fruit. As the word of God says the death happened in his life. Syrian fathers interpret it as Adam becoming sick after having the fruit, than the spiritual death.

This spiritual death of Adam is mentioned in the Kohanaitho (book for the funeral service of the priest) as

Kalpana lan-ki-chappo-zha-ngadam

Nishprabhanai theernnu.

Pambum havvaa-yum moolam hantha bahishkruthanayonam

Sunnaranamadamine ortheeren mar kanneer thooki.

When Adam disobeyed the commandment of the Lord... He Lost his spirit (became dark).
The angels dropped tears looking on Adam who was dead because of the serpent and Eve.

The word of God says that the fruit of sin is death.
So Adam died spiritually as well.

Then what is Paradise?

Paradise is the place where the spiritual being is alive. It is the place where man can experience

the presence of God, the place where God and the spiritual man meet together and enter into dialogue every day.

Phardaiso eesaw dooyoro d keene.
Phardaiso eesaw shkeentho d'onwoye.
Phardaiso eesaw haaye dlomauphen
Phardaiso eesaw gnoono dlo phothar
Thoobawla man dashwe dnehave beh yorho.

Hsheemo- Daily prayer book of Syrian Orthodox Church, Friday Midnight prayer.

Paradise is the place of righteous.
Paradise is the dwelling of monks (onwoye)
Paradise is life without end
Paradise is the marriage feast (chamber) which does not pass away,
Blessed is he who is found worthy to have an inheritance there.

Where was Adam after his spiritual death?

After the spiritual death Adam lost the paradise. Even though he was physically alive he was not at all able to face the Lord and praise the Lord. He was in darkness and his thought was only in physical realm. So he felt ashamed. The curse of the Lord came upon Adam.

Second Adam A medicine for the wounded sin of First Adam

Blessed be the shepherd, who became the lamb our atonement! Blessed be the Vine shoot, which became the chalice for our salvation! Blessed also be the Grape, the source of the Medicine of Life! Blessed also be the Farmer, who became the wheat which was sown and the sheaf which was harvested! (Hymn on Nativity 3:15)

As Mor Ephrem says "incarnated Son of God, the light of world, the fruit of the firstborn, has incarnated to enlighten Adam from his darkness. He became a medicine for the wounded Adam.

The first Adam lost his image and likeness when he committed sin. The second Adam said that He was sent by the Lord to restore this image and likeness of God in Adam.

St John 6: 38- 50 says

"38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

41 The Jews then murmured at Him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from

heaven.⁴² And they said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he says, I came down from heaven?⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, murmur not among yourselves.⁴⁴ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Isaiah 54:13 Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.⁴⁶ Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.⁴⁷ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.⁴⁸ I am that bread of life.⁴⁹ Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.⁵⁰ This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. By the death, Jesus the Son of God becomes the ransom for us. By His resurrection He became our source of resurrection.

What Happens to those who die in Christ.

Jesus, our source of life and resurrection, says in Luke Chapter 20: 35-38

35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

36 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.

37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he call the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

To God, no human being is dead, or ever will be; but all sustain an abiding conscious relation to Him. But the "all" here meant "those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world." These sustain a gracious covenant relation to God, which cannot be dissolved. In this sense our Lord affirms that for Moses to call the Lord the "God" of His patriarchal servants if at that moment they had no existence, would be unworthy of Him. He "would be ashamed to be called their God, if He had not prepared for them a city"

In Luke 20: 38 God says "All live unto Him". ie; All spiritual man lives unto Him.

In St Mark Gospel Jesus warned the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection and in the eternal life of the human being (Mark 12:18) by saying "And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spoke unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err. Mark (12: 26-27)

To those who not believe in the resurrection and eternal life of spiritual man Jesus says "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? (Mark 12: 20)"

It is very clear from the Word of God that those who deny the resurrection of the dead and life after the physical death of the human being do not believe in the power of God. They are not aware of the power of God

What happens to a faithful after his/her physical death?

The life of Moses will give us an answer to this question

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. (Jude 1: 9)

In the Kohanaitho (Liturgy for the funeral service of the Syrian Orthodox Priests) this incident is mentioned in a beautiful way.

Bmawtheth mooshe makeeko eere raumo Nhez leekore
wahloph kohane velvoye moriyo othooro maphe wole
Shapheer wolo lgooro thnoorone
Vathroohone Kaathkoymo hdraw shaapheer vole L moro
d kulahen baryozo
Kaath kabro kom vamaaphe lreesho
d koolo banbeeyoozo Thaw nesmarle,
Shubaho lamaphe abdaaw
hale-lluyaah Leh theshbuhatho.

Moosa Nibhi than
Maranathin Bahumaanaartham
Vannee-rea-nmaar
Aa-ja-ryan-po-l Avane yadakkam cheythudayoa-n shaylam-than-nil
chuttum ninno ragnyanmee-yanmaa-r.
Kkavanathyanda preethiprathanallo
Ni-bhiyan-maa-rthan thalavane nighila
Jagthnaadhan samskaa-ram-chey
thennathu paarthaa-lathu yogyam
Daasanmaare kabariladakeedunnone
halleluyah sth-othram cheyya-m

The transfigured body of Moses was taken into heaven by the angels of Lord. And he was visible to the Apostles later in the mount Thabore. (Luke 9:30)

It is very evident that those who please the Almighty as they are in the terrestrial life shall never die. They will surely leave the mortal flesh here, and will enter into a peaceful rest till the time of judgment. But those who remained just and got purged out of all earthly evils shall straight away reach before the throne of the God, to praise him in his presence along with the four creatures and twenty four Patriarchs. The book of Revelation give witness to it, Rev 7: 14-15 “And I said unto him, sir, thou knowest, and he said unto me, these are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robe, and made them white in the blood of lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He shall sit on the throne shall dwell among them.” So it is clear that clinical/physical death is not the end of all.

Two types of death in Bible

Bible speaks about two types of death. One is the Physical Death/ Clinical Death other one is the Spiritual death.

Physical Death/ Clinical Death

Genesis 25: 8 – 9 “ Then Abraham gave his Ghost and died, in a good old age, an old man and full of years and was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ismail buried him in the cave of Machpela. Deuteronomy 35: 5-6 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he was buried in a valley in the land of Moab. 1 Samuel 25:1 And Samuel died, all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried in his house at Ramah. It is undoubtedly clear that all the three of them had died and got buried in specific places. But where are they now? Are they not in connection with the God and in the Silence as the Psalmist says? Let’s see what the scripture says, Luke 16: 19-31 is the proof for the existence and the whereabouts of Abraham. 16: 13 and from hell the rich man lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Abraham is not lying dead in the Machpelah cave, but he is in the paradise. He is not in Silence, as seen from the following few verses of the dialogue between the rich man and Abraham. As we have seen Moses was buried by God in the Valley of Moab. Where is he now? What does the scripture say? Luke 9:30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah! So, Moses is still alive and is in the service of the Lord even after thousands of years of his death.

Now comes Prophet Samuel : We have seen that his body has been buried in Ramah. What happened to him after that? Ask Saul whom he ordained as the King of Israelites. 1 Samuel 28: 13-15: ... woman said unto Saul I saw gods ascending out of the Earth. As he said unto her, what form is he of? And she said an old man cometh up; he is covered with a mantle and Saul perceived that it was Samuel, he stooped with his face to the ground. And Samuel said unto Saul, why hast thou, disquieted me.....In the following few verses Samuel Prophecies the death and destruction of Saul and his family. So, the Bible says that Godly men shifts off from the earth but remain alive and God uses them in His service even after death. From these incidents it is clear that clinical death is not the end. It is only the beginning of a new life with the God.

Spiritual Death

Spiritual Death means the separation of the Holy Spirit from a man because of his sinful deeds.

We can see that David Prayed to the Lord to restore the Holy Spirit in him

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” (Psalm 51:10 – 12)

We can come to the conclusion from the Words of God that spiritual death is the state of having no Holy Spirit/ right Spirit/ free Spirit.

In Psalm Chapter 115 David say

“Their idols are of silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speaks them through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that

trusteth in them.” (Vs 4-8)

At the end of this chapter he again repeats that “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.” The dead here meant by David as the one who make and worship idols.

Vs. 18 says about the state of a just who worship true God. “But we will praise the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.”

In Isaiah 8: 19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

In the above words those who are mentioned as dead by Isaiah is, who have familiar spirits, and the wizards that peep, and that mutter:

Those who have no Spirit of God are considered in the Bible as dead.

Rev. 3:1-2 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Here Lord says I have not found your work perfect before me and that you have a name that you are alive but you are dead. Here God warns them to be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.

We can come to the better understanding that even though the human beings are physically alive they are dead before God when they commit sins.

Who deserves the resurrection from the dead and the eternal life?

Only those who are the part of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ are deserved to the resurrection from the dead and eternal life.

Jesus says.....I am the Way, Truth and Life.