

CHAPTER 6

ON DEATH: Body, Spirit, & Soul and Heaven & Hell

What is death? What happens after death? These questions are fundamental concerns of Christians and non-Christians alike. While scripture provides answers, religious denominations have constructed diverse explanations for questions concerning death.

What I'd like to do here, is to sort out the biblical truth from the doctrinal errors that the denominations appear to make. The Bible is the basis for resolving doctrinal conflicts. It is specially good in dealing with the issues of this chapter.

The subjects to be studied in this chapter are impossible to consider as separate items. Any attempt to study these subjects separately, is virtually doomed to failure because they all have so much in common. Each topic seems to involve the other in some way. Here, we'll first try to understand the nature of body, soul, and spirit; then we can address the after-death question and the issue concerning the existence of heaven and hell.

BODY, SOUL, & SPIRIT

In the Bible, we are told that God makes the human body from the dust of the earth. At death, this body goes back to the dust of the earth;

Gen. 2:7 (NIV)

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground.....

Eccl. 12:5-7 (NIV)

The man goes to his eternal home.... And the dust returns to the ground it came from.

With the making of our bodies complete, God gives us life by inspiring within us a unique spirit. This spirit is the essence of our being. It is the means through which we are made to live, to think, to feel all emotions, and to

make decisions. When God places this spirit into the flesh of the body, the result is a living soul;

Gen. 2:7 (KJV)

The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

So, man became a living soul only after God breathed into his body, his human spirit. The spirit that God breathes into the human body is not the Holy Spirit. That is God's Spirit. The spirit placed within the human body is unique and different for each individual;

Dan. 7:15 (NIV)

I, Daniel was troubled in spirit.....

Zech. 12:1 (NIV; my underlining)

This is the word of the Lord concerning Israel. The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him,

I Cor. 2:11 (NIV)

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him?

One religious group mistakenly believes that 'spirit' should be interpreted as 'breath,' everywhere in the Bible. Such an arbitrary interpretation renders verses like Dan 7:15 and I Cor. 2:11 and I Thess. 5:23 fully meaningless, and even nonsensical. The context in which a word is used, is important. Try making that suggested replacement in the indicated verses.

Sometimes the scriptures make a distinction between the spirit and the soul;

I Thess. 5:23 (NIV)

..... May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.....

The soul then, can be considered to be the living entity consisting of the body and the spirit combined. If you like math, you could describe it this way;

soul = body + spirit.

Sometimes though, the scriptural words for spirit and soul seem to be interchangeable. For example;

Gen. 35:18 (KJV; my underlining)

And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she had died)....

Here, the KJV translates the Hebrew too loosely. Vines Old Testament Dictionary (Reference-14) indicates that there are subtleties in the meanings of the Hebrew word for 'spirit.' These subtleties are not all captured by the 28 different English words that can be used to properly translate the contextual usage of 'spirit.' According to Gesenius (Reference-13, #5315), the Hebrew wording could be translated as "soul" only to the extent that what is meant, is;

"..... anima by which the body lives, the token by which life is drawing breath....."

Gesenius further points out that in this context the best English translation of 'soul' should be;

"..... life, vital principal."

Reading Gen. 35:18 with 'life' replacing 'soul' (as Gesenius seems to suggest) makes self-consistent sense, and is consistent with the concept of soul already mentioned here. Actually, Gen. 35:18 makes complete sense, even as it is written in the KJV. That is, her soul did depart her. When she died, the departure of her spirit from her body meant that her soul (i.e., spirit + body) was no longer there.

Other scriptures give indication that we have a spirit given from God, placed by Him into our body, and the soul being the result of that combination;

Heb. 4:12 (NIV; my underlining)

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,

II Cor. 5:10 (NIV; my underlining)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

So, we are not our bodies, we are *in* our bodies. Now we can answer one of the two questions initially posed.

WHAT IS DEATH ?

When the God-given spirit separates from, or departs the human body, then that person has died;

Jas. 2:26 (NIV; my underlining)

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Luke 23:46 (NIV; my underlining)

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, He breathed his last.

When Jesus reached the point of death on the cross, He acknowledged the translation of His Spirit from His body.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH ?

Christians are not afraid to die. That's because the Bible has much to say about what happens after our spirits leave our bodies. What it does say, engenders encouragement and confidence in Christians.

The Christian has accepted and reached out in acceptance of God's gospel (see Chapter-4; Baptism & Salvation). Because all Christians have already been made a part of His kingdom (see Chapter-8; The Kingdom), there is no fear in this transition called death. At death the Christian continues the promised eternal life, under the blessing of God;

I John 5:13 (NIV; my underlining)

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Col. 1:13 (NIV; my underlining)

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul used the *past tense* a couple of times in the second verse. That's important because he was writing to Christians who were still alive at that time. So, Christians already know that they have eternal life- even before the judgment. If you don't believe there will be a Judgment, then read on.....

THE JUDGMENT

A Judgment will occur when Jesus Christ returns from the right-hand of God in heaven. This Judgment though, is not precisely like the process that occurs in an American court of law. In our courts, the defendant goes through a trial. The judge starts out open-minded. No decision is rendered until all the evidence is heard. The judge weighs the evidence. At the trial's end, the defendant stands before the judge. The judge then pronounces verdict and sentence.

Christ's Judgment has similarities, but also has important differences from the workings of our judicial system.

II Cor. 5:10 (NIV)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Rom. 14:10-12 (NIV)

..... For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written; "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God," So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Where a human judge ponders and weighs evidence and circumstances, Christ as our Judge, does not. His Judgment is one of separating the righteous from the unrighteous;

Matt. 16:27 (NIV)

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Jesus Christ already knows the Christians from those to be condemned. He does not need to ponder a decision for each of us. That's why Christians can stand up before the Judgment seat and confidently know the outcome of it all.

So the Judgment is more like a final accounting of things we've done. It's not a decision making process for Jesus. In this accounting, each one stands before Christ and a sentence is rendered. Here are a couple of descriptive scriptures that clarify this situation. In the first one, Peter is talking about Pagans who chose lives of lust, drunkenness and orgies;

I Pet. 4:5 (NIV)

..... But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Rom. 14:10 & 14:12 (NIV)

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat..... So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Matt. 25:31-33 (NIV)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left...Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Even after salvation is attained, the potential exists for a Christian to sin. That renewed purity is achieved by our returning to God - for forgiveness of those sins;

I John 1:7 & 1:9 (NIV)

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have a fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son purifies us from all sin.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

We can pray to God, requesting forgiveness of those continued sins. Our prayers will be answered as long as we are walking 'in the light.' That is, we are walking with deliberation. We are attempting to follow what He has taught us.

There's a lot written in the Bible about a Book of Life. At Judgment, the names of Christians are found in this Book;

Phil. 4:3 (NIV); my underlining)

..... help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rev. 3:4-5 (NIV; my underlining)

..... Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The names of Christians are already in this Book of Life. So, there is only joy for the soul of a Christian, at death. Sadness though, is normal as we miss those who have departed ahead of us.

It is really important for us to not fear death and the Judgment. So we should look at a few more scriptures, to confirm that a Christian's status is

already known at the point of death (and hence, is known before the Judgment);

II Pet. 2:4 (NIV; my underlining)

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [Tartarus], putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; ...

Here, the fate of the angels who sinned is already set before the Judgment. This verse tells us that they are in a state of misery and punishment while waiting for the day of Judgment. Therefore, at the Judgment, the only thing left to be done is a final accounting of each one. Think about this for a moment.... Would God put them in a place of torment, only later to judge them as saved?

There's another biblical reference showing that the actual judging is done at death. It's the discussion of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke Chapter-16. While some denominational controversy exists concerning the events of that chapter, let's temporarily avoid it. We'll come back later to resolve that difficulty. For now, let's just note of two things. At death, the saved one (Lazarus) is sent directly to a part of hades that is much like heaven. The unsaved one (the rich man) is sent directly to the part of hades reserved for torment and punishment until the day of Judgment. Hades will be shown to be the waiting place for those who have died before Christ's Second Coming. The decision on each of their eternal lives was therefore made at the time of death.

Now we can say what happens to anyone who dies before the day of Judgment. We know the physical body reverts back to the dust of the earth. So now, let's look a bit more closely at the scriptural details concerning the location and condition of our human spirits in this place called hades.

HADES

We have plenty of scriptural information about both saved and unsaved spirits after death has occurred. Our spirits are placed by God into hades-the abode of spirits of people who have already died and await Judgment.

It is important to be really careful in a scriptural study of hades. That's primarily because of a particular difficulty with the KJV (which a dominant number of people read..... to the exclusion of other more understandable and more correct English translations of the ancient manuscripts). The KJV always translates 'hades' as 'hell.' There's a profound difference between them, even though some similarities do exist. Hell is a place of eternal punishment. Hades though, is temporary. The unsaved spirits there, do suffer torment but the saved spirits do not. In hades, the saved spirits enjoy the benefits of heaven while waiting for the day of Judgment. At that day, they are translated to their eternal life in heaven. Let's see then, how the Scriptures support these statements.

First, concerning the people of Capernaum (they didn't accept the gospel);

Matt. 11:23 (KJV; my underlining)

And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Matt 11:23 (NIV; my underlining)

And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths [hades]. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

Matt 11:23 (Interlinear; my underlining)

And thou, Capernaum, not as far as heaven wast thou exalted? As far as hades thou shalt descend; because if in Sodom happened the powerful deeds having happened in thee, it would have remained until today.

These are three different translations. The last one- a transliteration, replaces the Greek words with their English equivalents. So, the word order is not precisely what we'd expect in English, but the intended meaning of the passage is made quite clear.

The KJV depiction of Matt 11:23 is consistent with its unwavering translation of 'hades' as 'hell' wherever it appears in the New Testament. The NIV declares 'hades' as a footnote; and the Interlinear transliterates the Greek word into the proper English, as 'hades.'

Thayer (Reference-12; #86) gives us the meaning of the word as it is specifically used in Matt. 11:23. It refers to;

"the realm of the dead..... the common receptacle of disembodied spirits."

How then, do we know that a person has a peaceful stay, or a stay of torment in this place called hades? The two parts of hades are separated by an impenetrable gulf. The side occupied by the saved spirits is called 'Abraham's Bosom' in Luke Chapter-16, and 'Paradise' in other scriptures;

Luke 23:43 (KJV; my underline)

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Acts 2:31 (KJV)

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, That his soul was not left in hell {hades}, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Here, Jesus Christ is our example. He told the thief being crucified on the nearby cross, that they'd be together in 'paradise.' Yet Peter in talking to the crowd specified that Jesus was in 'hades' after the crucifixion. A direct connection therefore exists between hades and paradise.

Jesus' punishment received for our sins occurred while He was on the cross. It continued until He said that it was finished;

John 19:30 (NIV)

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is

finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Now after His death, Jesus would not have gone into the side of hades reserved for those spirits in torment. God's decision on their eternal fate is already final. Jesus had just suffered for the sins of mankind and pronounced the task as finished. Jesus' statement to the nearby thief shows that He went to the side of hades reserved for the spirits of those saved. Here's how Thayer (Reference-12; #3857) defines the word 'paradise' as it is used in Luke 23:43;

"That part of hades which was thought by the later Jews to be the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection."

Another example of hades as a waiting place for the departed spirits is provided by Acts 2:34. David, who has been dead for hundreds of years, has not yet gone to heaven to be with the Father;

*Acts 2:34 (NIV)
..... For David did not ascend into heaven*

David then, is not yet in heaven. In view of the scriptures we've just reviewed, he must be in hades awaiting the Judgment.

The fact that hades also has a part set aside for unsaved spirits suffering in torment while awaiting the Judgment, is provided by Peter;

II Pet. 2:4 (NIV)

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [Tartarus], putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for Judgment.

II Pet. 2:4 (Interlinear)

For if - God angels sinning spared not, but in pits of

*gloom consigning to Tartarus delivered [them]
to judgment being kept.*

Let's take a closer look at this word, 'Tartarus.' Thayer gives a definition as it is specifically applied in this verse (Reference-12; #5020);

*"The name of a subterranean region, doleful & dark,
regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the
wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their
evil deeds; ..."*

In both the translated and transliterated forms of this verse, it's definite that the stay of spirits there, is temporary. You can tell that, from the phrase 'to be held for Judgment.' God will also take the spirits from that side of hades, so they can also be present at the Judgment.

Finally, there's Luke's account of the events surrounding the death of Lazarus and a rich man. It gives strong corroboration for the description of hades and events there;

Luke 16:19-31 (NIV; my underlining)

*There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and
very fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his
gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with
sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's
table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

*the time came when the beggar died and the angels
carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died
and was buried. In hell {hades} where he was in
torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away,
with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, "Father
Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip
the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue,
because I am in agony in this fire."*

*But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your
lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus
received bad things, but now he is comforted here
and you are in agony.*

and besides all this, between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so they will not also come to this place of torment."

Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."

"No father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."

He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

This account of events in hades, lets us know some important facts about the spirits there:

1. The part called 'Abraham's Bosom' corresponds to 'paradise' in Luke 23:43. It is the waiting place of the departed, saved spirits (verse 22).
2. The rich man was in the part of hades reserved for torment of the unsaved spirits (verse 23).
3. A 'great chasm' exists between the two parts of hades. No one can leave either part to get to the other side (verse 26).
4. No one can leave either side of hades to go back to the earth for any reason (verses 30 & 31). So, if you think you see the 'ghost' of a departed one, you would do well to think again. The departed spirits cannot return here. Whatever spirit you do see, must be a ruse..... a deception from Satan. Even so, there is no need to fear because God has provided protection for Christians;

Jas. 4:7-8 (NIV; my underlining)

Submit yourselves then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

5. Of peripheral interest is this; in hades, the spirits of the departed do have active memories of things that transpired while they were living on earth (verse 25 & 28).
6. From their vantage point in hades, the spirits cannot actively see what continues to transpire here on earth. Remember, the rich man only had memories of the sinful activities of his relatives back on earth. He couldn't see what was occurring as he was speaking to Abraham. Consider this: if the spirits on the 'good' side of hades could see what is happening to their relatives here, on a day-to-day basis, then these saved spirits would indeed be a miserable lot!

In conclusion then, the Judgment is a final accounting of the matters already decided by God; it is a translating of us, the kingdom, to heaven and our eternal reward;

I Cor. 15:24 (NIV)

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

HEAVEN & HELL

Heaven is a place of eternal reward. Hell is a place of eternal torment. These states of existence are well documented in the Bible. Here are a couple of references to the eternal life of the *saved* spirits;

I Pet. 1:3-5 (NIV; my underlining)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth

Into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and an inheritance that can Never perish, spoil, or fade- kept in heaven for you.

John 14:1-3 (NIV; my underlining)

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust Also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if It were not so, I would have told you. I am going there To prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a Place for you, I will come back and take you with me That you also may be where I am.

Dan. 12:2 (NIV)

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will Awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and Everlasting contempt.

II Cor. 5:1 (NIV; my underlining)

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is Destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal House in heaven, not built by human hands.

Some have argued that the eternal home might have been built in heaven, but they feel they'll live that eternal life on the earth. Taken altogether, these verses just quoted are definitive; the eternal life with the Father will be in heaven. In the last verse in particular, here is what Thayer (Reference-12; #3772) has to say about this 'eternal house in heaven.'

"..... heaven is appointed as the future abode of those who, raised from the dead and clothed with superior bodies, shall become partakers of the heavenly kingdom."

Heaven as the final home of the saved spirits is therefore a certainty. In the same way, we can use the Bible to demonstrate what awaits the unsaved spirits in hell;

II Thess. 1:8-9 (NIV; my underlining)

He (Jesus) will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.....

Col. 3:5-6 (NIV)

Put to death therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming [on those who are disobedient].

Heb. 10:26-31 (NIV; my underlining)

*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?
For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

The word, 'destruction' in II Thess. 1:9 does not mean annihilation- the ceasing to exist (as some groups teach). Rather, it refers to the eternal torment one eventually suffers in hell. As used in II Thess. 1:9, 'destruction' is given this definition by Thayer (Reference-12; #3639);

"The loss of a life of blessedness after death; future misery."

In these verses, the place of eternal destruction, of God's wrath, and of raging fire, is hell. It is not hades. Instead, it is the permanent place for the misery and torment of the unsaved spirits. Take a look at how Thayer (Reference-12; #2205) defines the 'raging fires' of Heb. 10:27;

"The fierceness of indignation, punitive zeal (of penal fire, which is personified)."

For much too long, many religious groups have built theologies that depart from the 'one faith' of Eph. 4:5. In so doing, they have devised belief systems that deny the concept of eternal punishment. The denial even extends to the concept of man's spirit. What follows are some of the more common and frequently heard objections to the ideas discussed so far.

VISITOR:

Our spirit is our breath. When it goes out at death, it ceases to exist. The soul is dead. It doesn't think, know, or do anything. Since the soul becomes non-existent, there can be no heaven or hell because there is no spirit to experience it. Here's proof;

Psalms 146:3-4 (KJV)

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Eccl. 9:5 & 9:10 (KJV)

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a

reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

ME:

You know the old expression about not seeing the forest for the trees... Right? Well I think that's what might be happening in your interpretation of Eccl. 9:5 and 9:10. Instead of reading these two verses as isolated entities, consider them both in the context of what is being discussed throughout Chapter-9 and Chapter-8 as well.

In those two chapters of Ecclesiastes, the primary mood of the 'teacher' is one of pessimism. Nowadays, some might have labeled him as chronically depressed. He ponders what he sees about life and death on this earth. He sees the righteous and the wicked sharing a common destiny. He observes that evil appears in everything that happens on the earth. In verse 9:4, he expresses the opinion that as long as one is alive, there is still hope that things could get better. Then in verse 9:5, he compares those alive on earth to those dead on earth (i.e., the physical grave). So in verse 9:5, he is indicating that those who are dead are buried and in the grave, cannot partake of the feelings and emotions and rewards reserved for those who are alive here on earth.

The 'teacher' hasn't stopped his long lament only to use verse 9:5 to provide a deep, doctrinal analysis of the existence of a soul or spirit after death. His lament continues through verse 9:10. He warns us to do whatever we are supposed to do while we are alive..... because once we die, we don't have access to the things on earth that provide knowledge and wisdom.

Throughout both Chapter-8 and Chapter-9, the emphasis of the 'teacher' is on what is happening here, on earth. Just count the number of times he uses the phrase, 'under the sun' in his comments. Gesenius (Reference-13; #8121) indicates that 'under the sun' is just another way of saying, 'on earth';

"under the sun, i.e., on earth, a usual phrase in the book of Eccl."

In fact, 'under the sun' is used by the 'teacher' six times in the first 13 verses of Chapter-9.

Those who have died, are in the grave and can contribute nothing to those living, and left behind on earth.

Contrary to your concept of the soul, is the expression of body and soul in these two verses;

II Cor. 4:16 (NIV; my underlining)

..... Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

II Cor. 5:1 (NIV; my underlining)

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven not built by human Hands.

It seems like we already studied this last verse, but for a different purpose. It appears that God has compacted an enormous amount of information into this one little Book. But let's look at the first of these verses right now. In verse 4:16, Thayer (Reference-12; #1854, #2080, & # 2081) determines from the ancient manuscripts that 'outwardly' refers to the body, and 'inwardly' refers to the soul. There is no ambiguity in these definitions;

"With a noun added..... the outer man, i.e., the body....."

"... the internal, inner man, i.e., the soul, conscience... that which is within, the inside...."

You can study verse 5:1 in a similar way. Of the 'earthly tent' Thayer specifies the following, from the original language (Reference-12; #3614);

"of the body as the habitation of the soul,"

Here's the meaning he ascribes to the phrase 'house in heaven not built by human hands' (Reference-12; #3619);

"used of the heavenly body, the abode of the soul after death."

Now, let's go back to the way you interpreted Psalms 146:3-4. I can see how these two verses, written in the King's English could lead one to the conclusion you reached. My approach though, is to check the contextual meaning of the two verses within the framework of the intent and meaning of the whole chapter (Psalms 146) containing these verses. What is the theme of the chapter? It is to ensure we know that given the choice of mankind or God, it is far safer to put our hopes for deliverance in God rather than in man. This chapter proceeds to tell us why God is the only realistic choice. Look at how these two verses are translated by the NIV and the GNB;

Psalms 146:3-4 (NIV)

Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.

Psalms 146:3-4 (GNB)

Don't put your trust in human leaders; no human being can save you. When they die, they return to the dust; on that day all their plans come to an end.

Both of these versions capture the essential meaning of the whole chapter. And both are self-explanatory. They clarify the intended meaning of verses 3 & 4. There is no attempt to establish a theology or doctrinal argument about what happens to the spirit when a soul dies.

VISITOR:

Well, Eccl. 12:7 does indeed relate human death to nonexistence. It tells us that once our breath is gone, we return to the dust of the earth. So after that, there is only nonexistence;

Eccl. 12:7 (KJV)

*..... Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:
and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

ME:

Here again, we need to look at the wording carefully. In the Bible, the Hebrew word for 'breath' can (and often does) simply mean the breath of one's mouth. But it does not always have that meaning. In many uses, the Hebrew word for 'breath' has the intended meaning given by Gesenius (Reference-13; #7307);

"anima, breath, life, the vital principle, which shews itself in the breathing of the mouth and nostrils... sometimes the human spirit is called also..... as being breathed into a man by God, and returning to him."

By this, our life force..... our essence leaves the body at death and God receives it to do with as He will. This point is fully in accord with the earlier discussion on this matter.

VISITOR:

Even if I accept your notion that the soul or spirit does live after death, Matt. 10:28 definitely proves that the soul will be destroyed in hell. Destruction means annihilation- there's nothing left after it is destroyed;

Matt. 10:28 (KJV)

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to

destroy both soul and body in hell.

ME:

This verse is another example of the injustice the KJV often inflicts upon earnest seekers of biblical truth. You're right- the key word here, is 'destroy.' But as with any word, we need to see if it has multiple meanings, depending on the context in which it's used.

In this instance, 'destroy' does not denote annihilation. Rather, Thayer (Reference-12, #622) shows with no ambiguity, that 'destroy' as used in Matt. 10:28 has this meaning;

"to devote or give over to eternal misery."

Our souls then, are not annihilated. Thayer's definition of 'destruction' is consistent with the other ideas mentioned about the soul. So, the concept that one's spirit can suffer eternal torment and punishment in hell is further upheld.

VISITOR:

Your discussion with regard to Luke 16:19-31 is erroneous. Those verses tell a parable.... A story. Nothing more. You cannot draw inferences about reality from a story. Also notice in the parable, direct mention of 'tongue' and 'finger.' Such fleshly things are unlikely in your spirit world; so once again you cannot rely on the parable for reality.

ME:

It's not so likely that the account given in Luke 16:19-31 is a parable. This is an event described by Jesus that has no parallel among the parables. Specially noteworthy is that unlike in the parables, Jesus named names. He identified specific people and told what happened to them. That doesn't happen in the parables. Also, even if the account of Lazarus and the rich man was a parable, it would still have a basis in fact - as did all the parables.

Concerning the use of words like 'tongue' and 'finger,' it seems reasonable for God to write to us in terms that we can reasonably understand. Remember, we have a very limited capacity to discern the machinations of the spirit realm. The terms used, are aids to help us comprehend the extreme degree of suffering that the rich man was experiencing. Since God is Spirit and hades is a spirit world, we cannot possibly comprehend the true nature of that world. Such words enable us to obtain a meaning that would otherwise be lost or misunderstood.

ON PURGATORY

Some religious groups believe in purgatory. They feel that when people are first made Christians, their sins are initially forgiven. However, prior to the death of a Christian there might be sins that are unforgiven. Since sin is abhorrent to God, He will not allow people into heaven unless they are pure..... free from all sin. Purgatory is where these remnant sins must be removed. Here's how an authoritative defender for this doctrine emphasizes its necessity (Reference-20);

"If a person dies in some bondage to sin, or has been crippled by sin's effects, this sin and its effects must be removed, forgiven, and purged before the person sees God face-to-face."

Reference-21 has a description of what happens in purgatory. It describes this purging of the sins of Christians who have died;

"The great mass of partially sanctified Christians dying in fellowship with the church but nevertheless encumbered with some degree of sin go to purgatory where, for a longer or shorter time they suffer until all sin is purged away, after which they are translated into heaven Gifts or services rendered to the church, prayers by priests, and Masses provided by relatives or friends in behalf of the deceased can shorten, alleviate, or eliminate the sojourn of the soul in purgatory."

PURGATORY & THE BIBLE

One of the primary scriptural sources used to justify the existence of purgatory is mentioned in Reference-20;

I Cor. 3:11-15 (KJV)

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

It's not difficult to understand how proponents of the doctrine can see so much of purgatory within these verses. We have the idea of fire testing a man's works, and the idea of a man being saved, nonetheless. While it seems tempting to accept the doctrine of purgatory based on these verses, a closer study will reveal that these scriptures have no relation to the concept of purgatory. To figure out why this is true, let's start by studying a few verses appearing earlier than verse 3:11.

In verses 3:5-9 the concern is about teachers of the gospel. Paul and Apollos are given as examples. Those teachers have laid the foundation of the gospel... namely, Jesus Christ. In maintaining this foundation in their teachings, they are clearly saved individuals.

Verses 3:11-15 deal with what these saved teachers do with this foundation of the gospel. Some build upon it in a way that expands the light of the truth so that many more are brought to Christ by that work. Others construct elaborate, expensive places of worship, and do other things that impede spreading the gospel... even though they maintain the groundwork, the gospel's foundation.

The work of the first kind of teachers will stand up to Christ's scrutiny on the day of Judgment and be affirmed by God. The work of the second kind of (still, saved) teacher is declared worthless at Judgment. Paul says that this second kind of teacher will 'suffer loss' even though salvation is still given at the Judgment. What possible loss could such teachers suffer, since we are

told that they do obtain salvation? I can think of two ways such teachers can suffer loss. For one, Christ at Judgment will expose the folly of their inadequate, improper, and incorrect works that were built on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. Secondly, they suffer the loss of not having experienced the true power of the gospel that exists beyond the fundamentals. Remember how Paul admonished the church at Corinth (verses 3:1-2) for needing 'milk' and not being ready for 'solid food.'

Therefore, verses 3:11-15 do not teach a doctrine of purgatory. The 'fire' in verse 3:13 and 3:15 is figurative. Look at what Vine's (Reference-15) says about 'fire' as it appears in these verses;

"fire is used besides its ordinary natural significance... of the divine judgment, testing the deeds of believers, at the Judgment seat of Christ."

So, the 'fire' in verse 3:13 refers to testing the legitimacy of those works through the power of Christ on the day of Judgment.

Here's another reason these verses (I Cor. 3:11-15) don't teach a doctrine of purgatory. They refer to events that are to occur on the day of Judgment, rather than at the moment of death. The proponents of purgatory specify that this cleansing fire operates on the individual directly after death. Their stand on this point is directly in conflict with the Bible. Purgatory then, is not borne out by these scriptures.

Purgatory is also not scripturally necessary. Paul's letter to the Romans explains that while we as Christians are safe in Christ, there is no condemnation upon us. If so, then there is nothing to be purged when one dies, having lived in Christ;

Rom. 8;1 (NIV)

Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Some are concerned about the time interval between initial salvation, and the time of a person's death. They see the problem that one's salvation is not 'protected' from sins committed during that time. Purgatory however, is not the solution to that problem. The answer lies in two simple concepts..... free will, and prayer.

God gives us free will. If we, after having been saved, deliberately sin by our own volition, then we have turned our backs on God, and wasted the free gift He granted us;

I John 3:6 (NIV)

No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Let's say that we sin after initially being saved. Also, let's assume we are truly remorseful about it. God has given us a way out from that sin. We have an advocate in Jesus Christ who speaks to God on our behalf, so that we will again be as pure as we were at the moment we originally obtained salvation.

I John 2:1 (NIV)

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Why then, should a Christian anticipate or experience the pain and torment suggested by the doctrine of purgatory? There's no reason.

Finally, here's how Elwell's Evangelical Dictionary (Reference-19) analyzes the issue of purgatory;

"This doctrine can be seen as a distortion of biblical truth for several reasons: (1) Clear Scriptural warrant is absent. The only possibly supportive text is in the Apocrypha (II Macc, 12:43-45). (2) The doctrine reflects an unacceptable ecclesiastical hubris that would claim to have clout in heaven concerning the extent of punishment of those already dead. This deprives God of his freedom and majesty as judge. (3) The doctrine reflects the loss of the triumphant awareness of the estachological reality of justification through the cross of Christ."

The second point in Elwell's argument supports all the earlier discussion about hades. When one's place in one or the other part of hades is determined, there is no scriptural place for this intermediate condition of purgatory.

ON REINCARNATION

While reincarnation is a doctrine seldom found in Christian churches, it sure seems to show up a lot in discussions with people. Reincarnation is the doctrine in which a living being ceases to exist in one body, only to become alive again in another body. Some forms of the doctrine even have the new life occurring in an animal or possibly a plant.

Reincarnation seems most popular among those who fear death. With this doctrine, one always knows that something new is awaiting. In most forms of reincarnation the quality of the next life depends to a large extent upon the kind of life the individual is currently leading.

It seems that quite a few advocates of reincarnation also profess to be Christians. It's extremely difficult to understand the basis for such a claim. The tenets of such a doctrine are completely at odds with the scriptures. Only two cases from the Bible need to be explored, to conclusively demonstrate that reincarnation is *not* a doctrine that Christians can embrace;

First is the straightforward teaching of Heb. 9:27. Every human being will die once, and then we await the Judgment at the second coming of Christ;

(KJV): And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.

(NKJ): And as it is appointed for man to die once, but after this, the judgment.

(AS): And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment.

(LB): And just as it is destined that men die only once and after that comes judgment.

(NIV): Just as man is destined to die once, and after

that to face judgment.

(RS): And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment.

(SE): It is certain that all men die one time. And the Judgment comes after death.

(GNB): Everyone must die once, and after that, be judged by God.

(Interlinear): And as it is reserved to men once to die. After and this judgment.

(LT): And as it is reserved to men once to die, and after this judgment.

So often when I discuss the import of this verse to proponents of reincarnation, the rebuttal is something like, "Well, that's how *you* interpret the Bible." But the truth couldn't be more clear. Here, all the translators agree fully, on the English rendition of the ancient manuscripts. The (LT) and Interlinear transliterations also refute this doctrine. Since man is to die once (and then Judgment), there is no way for the spirit of a man to return as another life... in *any* form.

As a second indicator that reincarnation is a false doctrine, review the discussion on Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). In that event notice that when the rich man died, he asked permission to return to earth, but he was denied. He couldn't come back as anything. The precedent provided by that lesson is consistent with that of Heb. 9:27. Reincarnation is therefore not a Christian doctrine.