

Death & Afterlife

Session 1: The Cause and Cure of Death

Worldly Thinking on Death

Luke 12:16-21

And [Jesus] told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

“The Wages of Sin”

Created for Immortality

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13, 16; 2:23-24 (SAAS)

...God did not make death,
neither does He have pleasure over the destruction of the living.

But the ungodly summoned death by their words and works;
although they thought death would be a friend, they were dissolved.
For they made a covenant with death,
since they were deserving to share it in common.

For God created man for immortality
and made him an image of His own eternity.
But death entered the world by the envy of the devil,
and those of his portion tempt it.

One Living Being, Two Parts

Genesis 2:7

then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

St Methodius of Olympus, *On the Resurrection*

Man, with respect to his nature, is most truly said to be neither soul without body, nor, on the other hand, body without soul; but a being composed of the union of body and soul into one form of the beautiful.

St Gregory Palamas (quoted in L. Puhala *The Soul, the Body, and Death 11*)

When God is said to have made man according to His image, the word “man” means neither the soul by itself nor the body by itself, but the two together.

Sin Brings Death

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death....

Spiritual and Physical Death

Fr Lazar Puhalo, *The Soul, the Body, and Death* 9

The soul tears itself away from the body with regret, not as from a separate object or container, but as from its own self, from a part of its own being.

Redirected to a Good Purpose

Making an End for Sin

St Gregory the Theologian, Homily 38.12

[Man] gains something even in this: death interrupts sin so that evil is not made eternal. Thus, the punishment became a philanthropy, a benevolence. For I am convinced that it is in this way that God punishes.

Nikolaos Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*

Thus, sinful man will not remain eternally a living corpse because of his separation from God – the Source of Life.

Curbing Pride

Genesis 3:4-5

the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Transformation through Decay

1 Corinthians 15:36-38, 42-44

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Christ's Defeat of Death

Hebrews 2:14-15

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.

Death Could not Stomach Sinlessness

St John Chrysostom, Homily 24.4 on 1 Corinthians

By accepting the body of Christ Death made a great mistake. It thought that it was an ordinary body: a sinful body and mortal just as the others held under its tyrannical authority. But as those who take food that cannot be digested by their stomach, will vomit not only the indigestible food, but whatever else they have eaten, so also with death. Death swallowed the all-pure and immortal body of the Lord, but immortal life was a bitter victual and indigestible for the gluttonous and insatiable Hades. It could not digest it and, therefore, vomited it! Together with the body of Christ, Hades ejected also all the dead held in its stomach from the beginning. The only appropriate and digestible food for death is sin. The sinless body of the Lord was inappropriate food for Hades. It resembled a stone that not only cannot be digested but also, if it remains in the stomach, will destroy it and breach it. When death swallowed the Cornerstone, the all-holy body of the Savior, it was in pain and distress, and lost all of its strength.

Hymn from the Canon of Holy Saturday

O Lord, through Your death You changed our mortality into immortality. For, in a way that is appropriate only to God, You render the mortal human race an immortal one by giving immortality to the body, which Your divine nature received. For, Your all-holy Body, Lord, did succumb to the separation and the distance from the soul, but it did not experience decomposition and annihilation. Your all-pure soul, having descended into Hades, did not remain there, as the souls of all other men. Since, neither Your soul was abandoned in Hades nor Your body experienced corruption, they were both reunited and resurrected. Therefore, that which You received in Your humanity was immortalized. Consequently, Adam, too, and all of human nature was also immortalized.

A Universal Man

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Temporary Death