

# The Two “Types” of Death

## **Introduction**

From my experience, most mainstream Christians have a rather limited understanding about the topic of *death*. Essentially, most Christians believe that death is a one-time, **permanent** event. In other words, most Christians hold that when a person dies, his physical body disintegrates – and that his body will never be re-created, ever again.

It appears to me that Scripture gives us much *different* information about death – and the possibility of life *after* death – than the belief listed above. So, let’s take a look in Scripture, to see what is listed there about that subject.

## **Two different descriptions of death**

First of all, Scripture contains two very **different** “descriptions” of what death is. In some cases, Scripture refers to death as “sleep”; while in other cases, Scripture calls death “destruction”. Here are some examples of this:

### Places where death is called “sleep”

#### **Psalm 13:3 (ESV):**

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death

#### **1 Kings 1:20-21 (ESV):**

<sup>20</sup> And now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. <sup>21</sup> Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted offenders.”

#### **John 11:11-13 (ESV):**

<sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.

#### **Acts 7:59-60 (ESV):**

<sup>59</sup> And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

### Places where death is called “destruction”

#### **Psalm 92:6-7 (ESV):**

<sup>6</sup> The stupid man cannot know;  
the fool cannot understand this:  
<sup>7</sup> that though the wicked sprout like grass  
and all evildoers flourish,  
they are doomed to destruction forever

**Matthew 7:13-14 (ESV):**

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

**Philippians 3:18-19 (ESV):**

<sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

**2 Thessalonians 1:9 (ESV):**

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might

**Ramifications of the two “death types”**

From all of the above information, it appears that there are two completely different “types” of death. For lack of better terms, I call those two types “sleep-death”, and “destruction-death”.

Certainly, there are some *similarities* between the two “types” of death. In particular, **both** types of death cause a person to become completely *unconscious*; and both of them cause our physical bodies to *disintegrate*.

However, there are also many differences between sleep-death and destruction-death. The sections below contain three of the most prominent differences.

1. Sleep-death happens to *everyone* – but destruction-death only happens to **enemies** of God

Scripture indicates that everyone will eventually undergo **sleep-death** – that is, followers of God, and enemies of God, will *both* encounter it. The only *exception* to this is that followers who are still *alive*, when Jesus returns, will never encounter sleep-death. Consider these passages:

**Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 (ESV):**

<sup>2</sup> It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. <sup>3</sup> This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

**Hebrews 9:27 (ESV):**

...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV):**

<sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

However, **destruction-death** only happens to people who **refuse** to follow God; i.e., faithful followers of God will *never* undergo that type of death. Consider the passages below. In those passages, the word “gehenna” apparently symbolizes destruction-death. This is because gehenna was a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem, where trash was completely burned up. So, if something is “cast into gehenna”, it symbolizes complete *destruction* of the object in question.

**Matthew 5:21-22 (Young’s Literal Translation):**

<sup>21</sup> Ye heard that it was said to the ancients: Thou shalt not kill, and whoever may kill shall be in danger of the judgment; <sup>22</sup> but I — I say to you, that every one who is angry at his brother without cause, shall be in danger of the judgment, and whoever may say to his brother, Empty fellow! shall be in danger of the sanhedrim, and whoever may say, Rebel! shall be in danger of the gehenna of the fire.

**Mark 9:47 (YLT):**

<sup>47</sup> And if thine eye may cause thee to stumble, cast it out; it is better for thee one-eyed to enter into the reign of God, than having two eyes, to be cast to the gehenna of the fire

**Luke 12:4-5 (YLT):**

<sup>4</sup> And I say to you, my friends, be not afraid of those killing the body, and after these things are not having anything over to do;

<sup>5</sup> but I will show to you, whom ye may fear; Fear him who, after the killing, is having authority to cast to the gehenna; yes, I say to you, Fear ye Him.

2. Destruction-death only occurs in the *next* age – **not** in this age

Another item to note is that destruction-death *only* occurs in the next age (the “Kingdom” age) – *not* in this current age. Consider the passages below, which discuss destruction-death. All of those passages describe events that will occur *after* Jesus returns – which means that they will occur in the Kingdom age.

**Matthew 13:40-42 (ESV):**

<sup>40</sup> Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, <sup>42</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 25:41,46 (ESV):**

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

**Revelation 20:14 (ESV):**

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Note that Revelation 20:14, above, refers to destruction-death as the “second” death. This implies that the *other* type of death – sleep-death – is the “first” death, so to speak.

3. Sleep-death is *temporary* – but destruction-death is **permanent**

From what I can see, the most *important* difference between sleep-death and destruction-death is the fact that sleep-death is **temporary** – while destruction-death is **permanent**. In other words, if a person undergoes sleep-death, he will eventually come back to life again, at some point in the future. However, if a person undergoes destruction-death, then he will never come back to life again – i.e., destruction-death is a *permanent* end of life.

The fact that **destruction**-death is permanent can be seen in many of the Scriptural passages that are listed above. For example:

- Psalm 92:7 states that evildoers “are doomed to destruction forever”.

- Matthew 25:46 states that enemies of God will “go away into eternal punishment” (referring to permanent destruction).

- 2 Thessalonians 1:9 states that evildoers will “suffer the punishment of eternal destruction”.

However, many Scriptural passages tell us that **sleep**-death is temporary – i.e., that people who have undergone sleep-death will eventually come **back to life**! Consider these passages:

**Daniel 12:2 (YLT):**

<sup>2</sup> And the multitude of those sleeping in the dust of the ground do awake, some to life age-during, and some to reproaches — to abhorrence age-during.

**Isaiah 26:19 (ESV):**

<sup>19</sup> Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.  
You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!  
For your dew is a dew of light,  
and the earth will give birth to the dead.

**John 5:28-29 (ESV):**

<sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup>  
and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

### Acts 24:14-15 (ESV):

<sup>14</sup> But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, <sup>15</sup> having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

As it turns out, the fact that sleep-death is **temporary** appears to be *exactly* why Jesus told people not to be sad or afraid, if one of their loved ones had undergone sleep-death! For example, take a look at this passage:

### Mark 5:35-36,39-42 (ESV):

<sup>35</sup> While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" <sup>36</sup> But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

<sup>39</sup> And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." <sup>40</sup> And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." <sup>42</sup> And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

So, if the "sleep-death" and "destruction-death" information listed in this post is correct, then it appears that Jesus was saying something similar to the following, in Mark chapter 5:

"Don't be sad about your daughter, because she has not undergone destruction-death. Instead, she has *only* undergone sleep-death – and as a result, I can **raise her from the dead.**"

## Conclusion

Here is a summary of the two "types" of death, listed above:

Sleep-death: This type of death happens to *everyone* (no matter how closely we follow God); and it is only *temporary*. In other words, people who undergo sleep-death will eventually come back to life. This type of death is evidently the "first" death.

Destruction-death: This type of death only happens to people who *explicitly refuse* to follow God. In addition, this death only occurs in the *next* age (the Kingdom age) – not in this age. Finally, this type of death is *permanent* – i.e., people who undergo this death will never come back to life. This type of death is referred to as the "second" death.

One item to take away from this post is as follows: As noted above, destruction-death evidently only occurs during the *next* age – not in *this* age. Therefore, all of the deaths that have occurred so far are apparently **sleep**-deaths.

As a result, every person who has *already* died will presumably come **back to life**, in the next age! Not only that, but if any of those people did not have the *opportunity* to follow God and Jesus during *this* age, then they will have that very opportunity, during the next age!

In other words, people who were “ignorant” of God and Jesus during this age, *will have* the opportunity to learn about them – and to be saved – during the next age.

Additional information about what will happen to people who *never* heard about God and Jesus can be found at [this link](#).