

Teachings Concerning *Spiritual Death*

What is Spiritual Death

Joseph Fielding Smith

Spiritual death is defined as a state of spiritual alienation from God—the eternal separation from the Supreme Being; condemnation to everlasting punishment is also called the second death. In other words, the second or spiritual death, which is the final judgment passed upon the wicked, is the same as the first death, banishment from the presence of the Lord. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:217)

Bruce R. McConkie

Spiritual death is to be cast out of the presence of the Lord, to die as to the things of righteousness, to die as to the things of the Spirit. Spirit beings as such never die in the sense of annihilation or in the sense that their spirit bodies are disorganized; rather, they continue to live to all eternity either as spirits or as resurrected personages. (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 756)

Dallin H. Oaks

Jesus Christ is also the life of the world because he has atoned for the sins of the world. By yielding to temptation, Adam and Eve were [page 65] “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Hel. 14:16). In the scriptures this separation is called spiritual death (see Hel. 14:16; D&C 29:41). [“The Light and Life of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, pp. 64–65]

Russell M. Nelson

But there is another type of separation known in scripture as spiritual death. (See 2 Ne. 9:12; Alma 12:16; Alma 42:9; Hel. 14:16, 18.) It “is defined as a state of spiritual alienation from God.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56, 2:217.) Thus, one can be very much alive physically but dead spiritually.

Spiritual death is more likely when goals are unbalanced toward things physical. Paul explained this concept to the Romans: “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Rom. 8:13.)

If physical death should strike before moral wrongs have been made right, opportunity for repentance will have been forfeited. Thus, “the [real] sting of death is sin.” (1 Cor. 15:56.)

Even the Savior cannot save us in our sins. He will redeem us from our sins, but only upon condition of our repentance. We are responsible for our own spiritual survival or death. (See Rom. 8:13–14; Hel. 14:18; D&C 29:41–45.) [“Doors of Death,” *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 73]

Joseph F. Smith

- We are called mortal beings because in us are seeds of death, but in reality we are immortal beings, because there is also within us the germ of eternal life. Man is a dual being, composed of the spirit which gives life, force, intelligence and capacity to man, and the body which is the tenement of the spirit and is suited to its form, adapted to its necessities, and acts in harmony with it, and to its utmost capacity yields obedience to the will of the spirit. The two combined constitute the soul. The body is dependent upon the spirit, and the spirit during its natural occupancy of the body is subject to the laws which apply to and govern it in the mortal state. In this natural body are the seeds of weakness and decay, which, when fully ripened or untimely plucked up, in the language of scripture, is called “the temporal death.” The spirit is also subject to what is termed in the scriptures and revelations from God, “spiritual death.” The same as that which befell our first parents, when, through disobedience and transgression, they became subject to the will of Satan, and were thrust out from the presence of the Lord and became spiritually dead, which the Lord says, “is the first death, even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say, Depart, ye cursed!” And the Lord further says, “But behold, I say unto you, that I the Lord God gave unto Adam and unto his seed that they should not die as to the temporal death, until I the Lord God should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance and redemption (from the first death), through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son. And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation; that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe; and they that believe not, unto eternal damnation, for they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, because they repent not.” From the

natural death, that is the death of the body, and also from the first death, "which is spiritual," there is redemption through belief on the name of the Only Begotten Son, in connection with repentance and obedience to the ordinances of the gospel, declared by holy angels, for if one "believe," he must also obey; but from the "second death," even that same death which is the first death, "which is spiritual," and from which man may be redeemed through faith and obedience, and which will again be pronounced upon the wicked when God shall say, "depart, ye cursed," there is no redemption, so far as light on this matter has been revealed. (See Doc. and Cov. 29:41-44.)

It is written that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men" who receive me and repent; "but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven unto men." If men will not repent and come unto Christ, through the ordinances of his gospel, they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, but must remain forever subject to the will of Satan and the consequent spiritual darkness or death unto which our first parents fell, subjecting all their posterity thereto, and from which none can be redeemed but by belief or faith on the name of the Only Begotten Son and obedience to the laws of God. But, thanks be to the eternal Father, through the merciful provisions of the gospel, all mankind will have the opportunity of escape, or deliverance, from this spiritual death, either in time or in eternity, for not until they are freed from the first can they become subject unto the second death, still if they repent not "they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall," and will continue subject to the will of Satan, the first spiritual death, so long as "they repent not, and thereby reject Christ and his gospel;" but what of those who do believe, repent of their sins, obey the gospel, enter into its covenants, receive the keys of the Priesthood and the knowledge of the truth by revelation and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and afterwards turn away wholly from that light and knowledge? They "become a law unto themselves," and "will to abide in sin;" of such it is written, "whoso breaketh this covenant, after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come." And again, "Thus saith the Lord, concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves, through the power of the devil, to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—they are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had

been better for them never to have been born, for they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity; concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come, having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father—having crucified him unto themselves, and put him to an open shame."—Doc. and Cov. 76:31-35.

Now, there is a difference between this class and those who simply repent not and reject the gospel in the flesh. Of these latter it is written, "they shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb," and "shall be redeemed in the due time of the Lord after the sufferings of his wrath." But of the others it is said, "they shall not be redeemed," for "they are the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power." The others, never having been redeemed from the first, cannot be doomed to the second death, or in other words cannot be made to suffer eternally the wrath of God, without hope of redemption through repentance, but must continue to suffer the first death until they repent, and are redeemed therefrom through the power of the atonement and the gospel of salvation, thereby being brought to the possession of all the keys and blessings to which they will be capable of attaining or to which they may be entitled, through the mercy, justice and power of the everlasting God; or, on the other hand, forever remain bound in the chains of spiritual darkness, bondage and banishment from his presence, kingdom and glory. The "temporal death" is one thing, and the "spiritual death" is another thing. The body may be dissolved and become extinct as an organism, although the elements of which it is composed are indestructible or eternal, but I hold it as self-evident that the spiritual organism is an eternal, immortal being, destined to enjoy eternal happiness and a fulness of joy, or suffer the wrath of God, and misery—a just condemnation, eternally. Adam became spiritually dead, yet he lived to endure it until freed therefrom by the power of the atonement, through repentance, etc. Those upon whom the second death shall fall will live to suffer and endure it, but without hope of redemption. The death of the body, or natural death, is but a temporary circumstance to which all were subjected through the fall, and from which all will be restored or resurrected by the power of God, through the atonement of Christ. (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp.14-16)

- But I want to speak a word or two in relation to another death, which is a more terrible death than that of the body. When Adam, our first parent, partook of the forbidden fruit, transgressed the law of God, and became subject unto Satan, he was banished from the presence of God, and was thrust out into outer spiritual darkness. This was the first death. Yet living, he was dead—dead to God, dead to light and truth, dead spiritually; cast out from the presence of God; communication between the Father and the Son was cut off. He was as absolutely thrust out from the presence of God as was Satan and the hosts that followed him. That was spiritual death. But the Lord said that he would not suffer Adam nor his posterity to come to the temporal death until they should have the means by which they might be redeemed from the first death, which is spiritual. Therefore angels were sent unto Adam, who taught him the gospel, and revealed to him the principle by which he could be redeemed from the first death, and be brought back from banishment and outer darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel. He was taught faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, in the name of Jesus Christ, who should come in the meridian of time and take away the sin of the world, and was thus given a chance to be redeemed from the spiritual death before he should die the temporal death.

Now, all the world today, I am sorry to say, with the exception of a handful of people who have obeyed the new and everlasting covenant, are suffering this spiritual death. They are cast out from the presence of God. They are without God, without gospel truth, and without the power of redemption; for they know not God nor his gospel. In order that they may be redeemed and saved from the spiritual death which has spread over the world like a pall, they must repent of their sins, and be baptized by one having authority, for the remission of their sins, that they may be born of God. That is why we want these young men to go out into the world to preach the gospel. While they themselves understand but little, perhaps, the germ of life is in them. They have been born again, they have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and they have the authority of the holy Priesthood, by which they can administer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Though they may know but little in the beginning, they can learn, and as they learn they can preach, and as they have opportunity they can baptize for the remission of sins. Therefore, we want them to do their duty at home. We want them

above all things to be pure in heart. (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp.432-433)

Atonement Overcomes Spiritual Death

Bruce R. McConkie

To atone is to ransom, reconcile, expiate, redeem, reclaim, absolve, propitiate, make amends, pay the penalty. Thus the atonement of Christ is designed to ransom men from the effects of the fall of Adam in that both spiritual and temporal death are conquered; their lasting effect is nullified. The spiritual death of the fall is replaced by the spiritual life of the atonement, in that all who believe and obey the gospel law gain spiritual or eternal life -- life in the presence of God where those who enjoy it are alive to things of righteousness or things of the Spirit. (*Mormon Doctrine*, p.62)