

Msg #143 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"Where Do You Go When You Die?"

With Randy Smith

(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, or send messages)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

Broadcast Schedule

WOLY AM 1500 - Battle Creek, Sat. 10am - Sun. 9:30am

WLQV AM 1500 - Detroit, Sun. 10am

Also, Internet Stream - www.am1500wlqv.com

WFPM

99.5 FM in Battle Creek - Fri. 3:30pm

99.9 FM in Albion - Fri. 3:30pm

103.7 FM in Jackson - Fri. 3:30pm

Also, Internet Stream - www.wfpmradio.org

Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about another question that has come in. The question is, where do we go when we die, and what is the state of those who are dead? Do we go to heaven when we die, or what? What do the dead know, if anything, when they are dead? Is heaven where we go, or do we just stay in the grave without having any comprehension of anything at all? Well, let's take a look at it, and I'll see if I can explain some of the Bible passages which give us the insight we need.

First of all, when a person dies, the Bible tells us that the dead will be in a place where they wait for the judgment of Christ. This will be in one of two places, depending on whether you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, or have rejected him. The wicked dead will spend the time waiting in a place called hades. For them, it is considered a place of torment because the wicked dead are separated from the presence of Christ and from the word of God, and they are aware of the judgment which is coming. However, the righteous will be in a place called paradise, which is also a waiting place, but a place that has no torment for the righteous dead because instead of being separated from Christ, they will be with Jesus. We can see the beginning of this concept if we look at the biblical story of the rich man and a beggar named Lazarus, found in the book of Luke. Let me read Luke 16:19-26, and we'll see what Jesus was saying. It says, "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and dined sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: also the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into

Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. 26 And in addition to all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that those who desire to pass from there to you cannot; neither can they pass to us who want to come from there.”

Now, notice two things. First, notice that the rich man was in torment, and that he wanted to be released from the torment and pass over to the place where Abraham was. Then, secondly, notice that Abraham and the rich man were clearly communicating. Jesus was not lying when telling this story, therefore, Abraham truly did explain something to the rich man. Therefore, the point that we have to recognize is that Abraham was not in a state of oblivion. He was, of course, dead, in the sense that his body had died. His body had ceased to have the breath of life. However, he, himself, was still a living soul. He was very much alive, only not in a flesh and blood form. At the time of death, our body dies. We are still a living soul, but are no longer living in bodies of flesh and blood, but in a spiritual state where we are a living soul but have no body. It is only in the resurrection that we are reunited with our bodies, and then, of course, our bodies will be immediately changed and become glorified bodies, in that they will no longer be flesh and blood bodies which are subject to the corruption from sin, but will be glorified bodies which will be incorruptible. Sin will then never again have dominion over our bodies.

It is our spirit that returns to God at the time of death. This is why Jesus spoke on the cross, saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Because mankind, just like God, is created as a three part person, we will leave one part of us, our body, in the grave, and then our spirit will return to God. Because of this, we will still be a living soul, except that we will only have a spirit and no body. Until our spirit is reunited with our bodies, we will be only a two part person instead of a three part person. We will be a living soul which has a spirit, but no body. Actually, the technical term for this condition is, disembodied. That’s what happens at the point of death. It is our body which dies, and we pass into a state of being where we live, but only as soul and spirit, and not as soul, body, and spirit.

We should also make note that Jesus told the thief on the cross that on that same day he would be with him, Jesus, in paradise. Jesus also states in Matthew 22:32 that God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Therefore, we cannot call Abraham dead except when referring to his body. The body may be dead, but the living soul and spirit of the person still remain. I don’t believe the dead in Christ go to heaven when they die, in the same sense as many people refer to it. However, Jesus said that we will be with him in paradise. The apostle Paul also said, “absent in body, present with the Lord.” This clearly implies an existence, and not mental oblivion. Some religious doctrinal views teach that the dead are clueless, because of the scripture found in Ecclesiastes 9:5 which says that the dead do not know anything. However, this scripture is not referring to the mental comprehension of dead people, but rather to the wicked who will

soon die and have no expectation of any future which they can look forward to. In these verses it says that the righteous do have knowledge of an eternal future, but that the dead do not have this knowledge.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Paul writes that those who are “asleep in Jesus” will not be left behind when Jesus returns. This means Abraham, Peter, and the rest of the righteous dead will be resurrected, and these people, who are in a state of being called Paradise, will be returned to resurrected form at that time. Although the bodies of the righteous dead will be in the grave at the time of Christ’s return, the Bible promises that the souls of those who live with Christ in paradise will return with Jesus to be reunited with their resurrected bodies, at which time their bodies will be changed into glorified bodies.

Exactly what Abraham’s current existence in Paradise is like, and exactly how the process of being reunited with his body will work, I don’t really know. But when the Bible says that all those who sleep in Jesus will be brought back with Jesus, it means that those who have died in the body will not stay dead, but their bodies will be resurrected and their spirits and souls will be reunited with their bodies. At this time the righteous dead will once again become three part persons instead of being just two part persons. They will be soul, body, and spirit instead of just soul and spirit.

It is true that our spirit does not think, because that’s not what a spirit is for. It is the spirit of the person that spans the communication gap between spiritual souls, and also between the living soul and the body. Communication in the realm of the dead is by spirit, not by physical vocal chords. Also, it is the soul of the person which contains the mental awareness, the thoughts and convictions of the person. It is the body that demonstrates, or should we say, manifests, these thoughts and convictions. The Bible tells us in Leviticus 17:11, that the life of the body is in the blood. This is why the blood is such a meaningful part of God’s sacrifice. Unless the blood is poured out, the flesh continues to live. And we know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. The body must die in order for the soul to live in the spirit. That’s why we are born again in spirit, so that we might have the hope of eternal life.

A correct definition of a soul means, that which is alive. A soul is a living being. It is the Spirit which quickens and gives life. Yes the body may be dead, and lie in the grave for thousands of years, but the soul is alive and God gives that life. Jesus himself said that God is not the God of the dead, and in John 8:56 he specifically says, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day.” This is in reference to Abraham’s mental awareness of the time when Jesus Christ came to earth as a man.” This statement alone makes it inconceivable that Abraham is dead and unable to think. If Abraham was in a state of oblivion and unable to think and could not know anything at all, then it would be impossible for him to rejoice. Also, if the dead have no ability to think, then how can communication of the dead with the living still take place from a spiritual perspective? Anyone reading the account in 1 Samuel 28 can readily see that there can be actual communication with the dead, but not in flesh and blood form. Also, when the transfiguration occurred after Jesus had been resurrected, and Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, we must recognize that Moses

had died and that God himself had buried him. Yet, here was Moses in communication with Jesus. Truly, this is not a state of oblivion for Moses.

Now, communication with the dead through the work of mediums and witches is flatly condemned by scripture. However, to deny that communication by the dead is possible is also to deny the truth of 1 Samuel 28, and other scriptures, which clearly show that the dead do have awareness and emotions. However, the dead do not have the ability to manifest these thoughts and emotions by physical means. It is only by spiritual means that the dead can communicate. Without the work of mediums, this communication is reserved to those who are living in a spiritual state themselves, and no communication with the living of earth is possible. So, in the sense of contact with those still living on earth, the dead are not aware of anything. But in the sense of contact with those in the realm of the dead, there is still communication and awareness.

It's true that our soul and our spirit return to God at death, but the death is only of the body. The soul lives always, but only in the spiritual perspective when the body of flesh dies. This is why it is imperative for us to be born again in spirit. Therefore, when the body dies, we will live in the spirit, and when Jesus returns, we will be reunited with our bodies. They will be immediately changed into a body which is no longer corruptible. Until that time we live with Christ in Paradise, which I suppose you could call, the spiritual state of the righteous who have no physical form.

And, one more thing. If the thief on the cross ceased to be aware of Christ for the last 2000 years, then Jesus lied to him by telling him that he would be with him that day. Or, at the least, it would be an empty promise. From my own perspective, it is a shame to give people the impression that to be with Christ is only a state of oblivion which includes no actual emotional experience. And another thing, if there is no life in the spirit for a living soul, then Paradise would not have been desirable by the rich man in hell.

Now, if I haven't confused you too much, let me see if I can bore you with some facts. I know facts are sometimes tedious, but they can also be very enlightening. So, let's take a look at some of the definitions used in the original languages of both the Old and New Testaments concerning such words as, the grave, hell, heaven, and paradise. It may help you to understand where the dead go at the time of death, and what they know and do not know during that time.

The word, grave, implies two things. It is understood as either a physical location for the dead physical body, or it is the spiritual location for spiritual man. We humans are first born as physical persons, and then when we become Christians, we become born again as spirit beings. When we die, our bodies go to the physical location of wherever our grave site is, but our spirit being enters the spiritual place of the dead.

Now, listen closely. I don't want you to be confused by this. Just keep the concept in mind that the body is a physical body, and therefore the grave of the body is a physical grave. When the body dies and is buried, then the soul of the person enters a state of being which is called *sheh'*

ole in the Old Testament, and *Hadace*, or, Hades, in the New Testament. This place is a spiritual place instead of a physical location because the existence of the soul is by the spirit within instead of having life through a flesh and blood body. Therefore, the Old Testament *sheol* or New Testament *hades* is a spiritual abode, or residence, for those who's bodies have died.

Now, the easiest way to remember this is by the word, hell, instead of referring to the Old Testament word, *sheol*, or the New Testament word, *hades*. You can best understand the place of death by referring to the grave as the place for the physical body, and hell as the place of the spiritual person.

Now, this does not mean that both the righteous dead and the wicked dead both live in the torment of hell. But initially, hell is just a designation of an abode of the dead, and whether or not torment follows this is dependent on another concept. The word *hades*, from which we get the word hell, actually means, not seen. When people die, they are no longer seen by those who are still living on the earth in flesh and blood bodies. When you die, you will not be seen anymore on earth, but will just be a remembrance in the minds of those still living on earth.

Have I lost you yet? Hold on a little longer and I'll try to bring this all together.

So, think of it this way. The body dies. The body goes to the grave and stays there. It no longer has a living soul, and therefore it no longer is able to move or think. It, the body, becomes inanimate. It no longer has life. So the only thing left of the person is the living soul, and the living soul is alive in the spirit even though it is dead in the flesh. The body is dead, but the person is still alive in the spirit.

Now the next part. When the spiritual person loses the body to death, the soul enters the spiritual world of the dead. And then again we have another division. Just as the grave is a dividing place between the physical body and the living soul, so is hell a dividing place for spiritual beings. We all enter the spiritual realm at the time of death, and in one sense the righteous live in the same realm as the wicked. However, in order to understand this next dividing process, you have to keep in mind that we are no longer talking about a physical location. Once the body is dead and buried, the physical aspect has ceased and the only location of our living soul that can be described is a description of a spiritual location. This is a bit difficult for people who have not been born again in spirit, and also not very easy for those of us who have been.

However, the important point is to realize that hell, in general, is first referring to the place of those who are considered dead because the body has died. But secondly, it is the dividing place between the wicked and the righteous in that in the realm of the dead there are two states of existence. The first state of existence is a state of torment. The wicked are tormented because they have no hope. Therefore, the realm they live in is referred to as hell. But the righteous have no torment because they have the knowledge of salvation that comes through the promises of God. Therefore, the realm they live in is referred to as paradise.

In the parable of the rich man and the beggar, the rich man was in torment because he had no hope of eternal life. Yet his torment was not shared by Abraham or the beggar. They were not in torment because they had the hope of eternal life through the promises of God. The rich man did not have these promises. Therefore, Abraham and the beggar were described as being in a place which the rich man desired to be, instead of being in his place of torment.

In scripture, hell is the place of the dead, and is the place where there is no hope, in that life on earth has ceased, and we no longer have a body. We can no longer have hope for anything once our life on earth ceases unless we have the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is this loss of hope that the wicked recognize when they are cast into hell. They know there is no eternal life with Jesus Christ, and they know there is no light of God ever again. The wicked, at the time of death, are cast into darkness, just as the angels in 2 Peter 2:4 are chained under darkness. They will never escape. But, the righteous have no torment in hell, for they have that hope of eternal life. Therefore, the righteous, even though they have left the life of earth and have entered the world where the body is dead, are not in torment because they dwell in a place of joy. This place is called paradise, and is the place that Jesus referred to when talking to the thief on the cross.

The word, Paradise, refers to a garden, in the sense of a place of peace and leisure. A place of contentment. For the righteous, the world of the dead is a place of great joy because they have the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the hope of eternal life.

Now, there is one more word that we must describe, and that word is, heaven. The word, heaven, means that place in which God dwells. However, heaven should probably not be described as being the same place as paradise, and this is the reason. Heaven is the abode of God, who is God in three persons. Those persons in paradise exist only as spirit and soul. Although we will be with Jesus, and Jesus certainly is in heaven, still it will not be until Jesus Christ returns in the clouds of heaven that we will be reunited with our bodies and then be once again body, soul, and spirit. In this sense, there is a clear distinction between heaven and paradise, in that with only soul and spirit, we will not yet have entered our final state. However, in the general sense, paradise is also in the heavenlies, and this is because in paradise we will be with Jesus. So, if you use the term heaven as the place where the righteous go at time of death, then generally you are correct. However, if you want to understand it better, or have others understand it better when you tell them, then you would want to say that our soul and spirit go to paradise when we die, and our body will go to the grave. Therefore there is no longer a knowledge of earthly things, but there is a knowledge of spiritual things.