

After Death

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A man once lived in the grave for 4 days by which Jesus spoke that he should be restored and by which he again walked among the living (Jn. 11:39-44). This was a living argument in favor of the divine power of the Savior. I am sure that many asked him what it was like, but as Paul said, “How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:4). Thus, Lazarus was also forbidden to reveal what he may have remembered from his death.

Now, in regards to where the spirit goes, some say that they cease to exist while others say that they sit in the ground for storage waiting for the resurrection . . . Which are we to believe, or it is neither? Well at death, the soul or spirit departs from the body and lives on while the physical body decays back into the ground. If this was not true, then the soul would simply be staring at worms and dirt because after a while, there is nothing of the physical body left for the spirit to cling to. So, we know this is not true. On the other hand, the soul does not die as some claim by the Scriptures because often the word soul means, “individual” as it does in Ezek 18:4, 20; as it does in 1 Pet 3:20 with the 8 souls saved by water, and many other places. Yet, if the soul does depart from the physical body, how do we know that the soul departs from the body? Well, let’s notice these evidences: James said, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (Jam. 2:26) Moses recorded that when Rachel was in labor, that, “it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin” (Gen. 35:18). Where did the life force within her go if it departed? Again, “And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” (1 Kgs. 17:22) Thus, the soul returned and again the boy lived in the body. Remember that it was God who had Solomon write, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” (Eccl. 12:7) When speaking of the spirit departing the shell of man, Jesus told the penitent thief, “. . . Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Lk. 23:43). Jesus and the thief both died that day, yet both were together in spirit in the same place. Later Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” (Lk. 23:46). Jesus’ body was lifeless and there was something inside Jesus that departed and went into the hands of the Father. This does not mean into Heaven, but thy hands means into the father’s power, protection or security. Also notice that, Stephen cried out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59) His spirit was being forced from the body by the cruel stones hurled upon him by the mob. Then Paul said, “though our outward man perisheth, our inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4). Here Paul shows that one side of man’s nature is failing him while the other side of man’s nature is taking on new life and strength. Thus, while death means separation from living love ones, faithful companions, friends,

parents, a child; while it is also the end of abilities and opportunities on earth, IT IS NOT THE END OF ALL THINGS!

Now, to further this study, where does the soul go because some claim that when one dies, he goes immediately to its eternal destiny. Thus, if it is a righteous spirit, it goes immediately to Heaven. But, if it is a wicked spirit, it goes immediately to Gehenna. However, the scriptures teach that the spirit goes into an intermediate place (the place between earth and heaven) and remains there until the great day of judgment. Now, while we often speak or put very little emphasis about judgment, Jesus teaches that “when he comes, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment” (Jn. 16:8) Luke said that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world. (Acts 17:31) In Matt. 25, it states that all nations shall be gathered before Christ by which he separates the sheep and goats. Furthermore, Jesus said that “men of Nineveh” shall rise in judgment with the present generation which lived 500 years before them (Matt. 12:41). The Queen of the south shall rise in judgment with the present generation which lived 1,000 years before them (Matt. 12:42). Sodom and Gomorrah will be in the same judgment as those living during the days of Christ indicating the same judgment (Matt. 10:15). Both Peter and Jude declared that angels which have sinned have been cast down into pits reserved for judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Therefore, men are not judged at death and sent onward to their final destination of Gehenna or Heaven. For, “God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and reserve the unjust until the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Pet. 2:9). Both are held until judgment, but if not in the ground, then where?

Hades has often been mislabeled as the final torment place for the sinner. But in actuality, Hades is the unseen world or the spirit world. Every single soul that dies goes into hades. Hades is broken into two realms: First, Tartarus is the place where the wicked are held until the day of judgment. This is where the angels that God cast out are being held or reserved (2 Pet. 2:4). Tartarus means a dungeon or a prison house where one is held captive. Yet, it is not the place where one goes after judgment because that word is Gehenna (Matt. 5:22, 29; Lk. 12:5). The second area of Hades is Paradise where Jesus and the thief went into when they died. Now, we know that this is not heaven, because while Jesus was there 3 days, he tells Mary that he had not yet ascended to the Father meaning that the Father does not dwell in Paradise (Jn. 20:17). The word Paradise means a pleasure garden or Eden. So while there are two sections of Hades: Tartarus and Paradise, there is also a great gulf (gap or chasm) that separates the two which one can read about in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk. 16). It was a division of the two areas by which nothing passed between them. Lazarus paid no attention to the rich man after death and we read that Abraham told the rich man that his opportunities were all gone meaning that his doom was sealed. So, Lazarus was in Abraham’s bosom (Paradise) which is another way of speaking where the righteous go (Matt. 8:11). The rich man was by no means happy after his death living in torment (Lk. 16:24). Thus, the spirit does live on after the physical body is no more and the Bible proves that we do not stay with our physical bodies, but that, we go to the hadean realm either in torment or in peace until God brings forth the great day of judgment.

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