

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CRITICAL QUESTIONS: Beyond Death's Door



- 1—Is There an Assurance of Immortality?
- 2—Is There an Unclothed State of the Dead?
- 3—Why a Resurrection?
- 4—Why a Judgment?
- 5—Is There Reward for the Righteous?
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2008

Lesson One

"Is There Assurance of Immortality?"

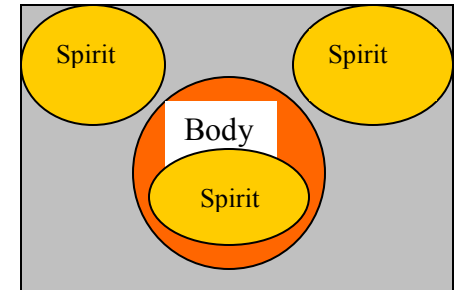
(Acts 8:5-13)

People like "Simon the Sorcerer," through the Centuries, have appealed to man's curiosity about the things beyond this world—and especially about the future. Such people can often create great excitement in the minds of certain people. And they can make a lot of money in the process. This curiosity about the unusual and the future is in the realm of religion as well. Hopefully, all of us are concerned about what will happen to us after death. We all know that death is coming, but what about after death—what will happen to "us?" Is there any way to know for certain? We are fully persuaded that the Bible is the only dependable source to which we can turn for answers to these kinds of questions!

The Make-up of Mortal Man

"So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." (Gen. 1:27).

The Bible states that God formed the body of man from the dust of the ground; and then, breathed into his nostrils the "breath" or "spirit" of life—and he became a living being (Gen. 2:7). Without the "breath" or "spirit," the body was "lifeless." With the "breath" or "spirit," the body became "alive," "active," "living!"



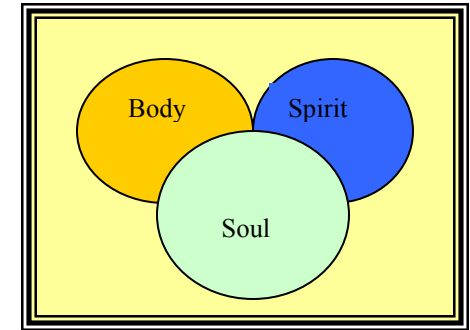
But take away that "spirit of life" and the body becomes "dead!" (James 2:26). Go to a funeral home and view a body. When you look at that dead body—everything is there but one thing—the spirit is gone! The body must have the "breath or spirit of life" within it in order to be "alive!"

Man is called "mortal" because he is capable of dying (Thanatos) (Rom. 6:12; 1 Cor. 15:53-54; 2 Cor. 5:4; Gen. 3:19). This death was brought about by man's disobedience and being driven out of the Garden of Eden where he had access to the "Tree of Life." (Gen. 3:22-24). Man's mortality is in reference to his body and not the spirit within man. When the spirit of life is gone from the body, it not only becomes inactive, but it also begins to go back to dust (Eccl. 12:7; Gen. 3:19). God evidently designed the body for what we call "physical death," but not the spirit. The Bible does not speak of the spirit being dead like the body.

Man is a Tri-une Being

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23). God is a tri-une being and man is made in his image; therefore, it is possible that this could be what the statement refers to in Gen. 1:26-27.

BODY—This is the part of man that enables us to be active upon this earth. And...a part of our identity is with our bodies. We care for our bodies as a part of who we are. It is the physical part of man that houses the spirit (and soul).



SPIRIT—This is the part of the make-up of man that is generally identified with being like God (John 4:24). Some believe that we have God-like characteristics because of this "spirit of life" within our bodies. The uniqueness of our "spirit of life" can be seen in two things:

1. **This spirit within each being is unique in the entire universe.**
2. **It possibly becomes more unique as it develops within us along with our soul.** The Spirit or Soul is the real inner person.

SOUL—This part of man is identified with both our body and our spirit. It seems to actually be used interchangeably with the spirit. But at the same time the Soul is distinct from both our body and our spirit. The Soul is that inner person that will give an accounting to God in the Day of Judgment (1 Pet. 2:25). It is that part of man that can be punished by God for all eternity (Matt. 16:26; Matt. 10:28).

Is Death the End of Man?

This was Job's question: "*If a man die, shall he live again?*" Man has been asking this question possibly from the first death until now. It has been an insistent question because teeming throngs have lived and died upon this earth. And for centuries, it was a perplexing question for all men. Men may go for years without seriously pondering this question; but, sooner or later we will all ponder such—especially as we face the death of a loved one or face death ourselves. Is there an answer to this question—a **sure answer**? Belief in an existence after death has been a universal one of mankind from early in his inhabiting this earth. There are ancient written records that have been found from the Egyptians, Greeks, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Chinese

Japanese, Norsemen, Eskimos, etc., expressing belief in some kind of existence after death. And, if a person believes in God; then, logically, there ought to be some kind of existence after death. It is interesting to notice that the Jews came to such a belief from insights from the Old Testament (Job 14:14; 19:25-27; 2 Sam. 12:22-23, etc.).

The Assurance of Immortality!

With all of man's groping, searching, and longing, he was still not sure of life after death until Jesus came and said: *"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."* (John 11:25). The Apostle Paul's inspired statement re-asserts this concept: *"But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...."* (2 Tim. 1:10). While all the evidences pointed towards an existence after death; yet, there was a need for an absolute assurance—which Jesus gave to mankind! His resurrection from the dead removed all question of doubt of immortality for man.

What is Immortality?

Immortality is to raise up this mortal body and transform it into an immortal body—one that can never die like this physical body dies.

1 Cor. 15:42-44 _____

Phil. 3:20-21 _____

1 John 3:2 _____

It is the re-uniting of the new Body, Soul, and Spirit of man and fitting it for its eternal destiny (everlasting life or everlasting punishment). The New Testament only discusses what will happen with the raised bodies of those who are right with God—not the unrighteous. We will discuss this in the 5th and 6th lessons. Only God is capable of giving man that immortal body (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16).

Conclusion

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- _____ 1. Simon the Sorcerer illustrates the kind of religious people who try to deceive people about the future.
- _____ 2. Man cannot have an assurance of immortality apart from what the Bible teaches.
- _____ 3. The Spirit is said to be dead without a body to inhabit.
- _____ 4. All three components of man are mentioned in Gen. 2:7.
- _____ 5. A dead body has everything intact but one thing—his blood!
- _____ 6. The word "mortal" indicates that man, in his complete make-up, is capable of dying.
- _____ 7. The New Testament nowhere states that man's body is mortal.
- _____ 8. The Bible actually states that man is a tri-une being.
- _____ 9. Man's physical body is part of identity as a separate being from all other beings.
- _____ 10. The "spirit" is the only thing that makes man in the image of God.
- _____ 11. The only thing that makes man's "spirit of life" unique from all other creatures is his development.
- _____ 12. The "soul" of man is the same thing as the "spirit" of man.
- _____ 13. The "soul" dies at death, but the "spirit" of man lives on.
- _____ 14. Mankind, in general, have always believed in some kind of existence after death.
- _____ 15. "Immortality" has reference to the soul of man, not his body.
- _____ 16. Job did believe that man would survive death.
- _____ 17. The assurance of immortality did not come until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- _____ 18. Only God has the power to give man immortality.

Lesson Two

"Is There an Unclothed State of the Dead?"

(2 Cor. 5:1-8)

In our previous lesson we looked at **"The Assurance of Immortality."** It is obvious that the Scriptures teach that man's body will be raised and changed into an immortal body. But what about the "spirit" or "soul" of man, what happens to it until the resurrection of the body? Does our "spirit" die? Or, does the "spirit" survive the death of the body? It is the "spirit" that gives life to the body; but the "spirit" without the body causes the body to cease its activities on earth. The Scriptures teach that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). I have not been able to find where the Bible states that the spirit is dead apart from the body.

Old Testament Emphasis upon the State of the Dead

Can a "spirit" still exist without a body? To ask it, is to answer it! God is a Spirit and He exist! (Jn. 4:24). Angels are created spirit beings and they exist! (Isa. 6:1-3). Samuel, the Prophet, died and he spoke to King Saul and said: ***"Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shall you and your sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."*** (1 Sam. 28:19). Samuel was dead physically, but he still was in existence. Saul and his sons were killed in battle that day, but the next day they would be where Samuel was. Just where was Samuel?

Indications from Jesus about the State of the Dead

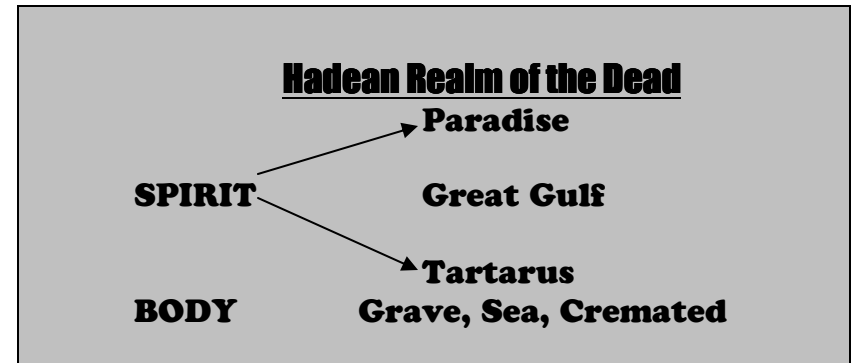
Jesus stated upon one occasion: ***"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.....God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."*** (Matt. 22:32). He makes a point of the tense of the verb—**Presence Tense!** God did not say ***"I was"*** but ***"I am"*** their God! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still "living" when this statement by God was made! What was "living?" The logical answer is that the spirit of man was still "living." But where?

Where does the Spirit go upon Death?

It would seem to be obvious that the spirit survives the death of the body. So, is it "asleep" like the body? ***"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."*** (Dan. 12:2). It is the body that is asleep, not the spirit! This

expression is never used with reference to the spirit, but only the body.

Some insight, but not clearly, is given in the book of Ecclesiastes: "***Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.***" (12:7). This states that the spirit of man goes back to God, but in what sense? Do all spirits go to Heaven? If so, both good and bad go to Heaven! Jesus commended His spirit to the Father in His death: "***Father, into your hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the spirit.***" (Luke 23:46). Where did Jesus' spirit go upon death? He told the thief on the cross that they both would be in Paradise that day (Luke 23:43). Peter stated that Jesus' soul was not left in Hades (Acts 2:31). In the Greek language, Hades is where the person goes upon death—not just to a grave! Jesus' body went into the grave, but His spirit, along with the thief's spirit, went into Paradise or Hades. The layout below will hopefully help you to envision what we are about to go into detail upon.



CAUTION! Humans think in terms of places, events, time, etc. God is accommodating to us and uses human terms about Himself, such as: He has arms, hands, head, feet, etc. God is also accommodating us by describing a "place" where our spirits go. In our thinking, man's spirit must go some place—so, God accommodates us and describes a place. In the Old Testament, the word "Sheol" was used. It appears about 65 times and is erroneously translated "Hell." When the Greek New Testament quotes the Old Testament word "Sheol," it uses Hades. Both Sheol and Hades are "Neutral terms." Both righteous and wicked spirits go into Hades. But Hades seems to be divided into two compartments:

1. **Paradise**—Where the Righteous spirits go.
2. **Tartarus**—Where the Unrighteous spirits go.

Hades is not the final state of man's existence, but a temporary one. It is an unclothed state (2 Cor. 5:1-8). In the final state (Heaven), we will be clothed upon with a new body.

The Angels that sinned in the rebellion against God have been cast down into "Tartarus" awaiting the judgment! If this is where the sinful Angels are, it is probably where the sinful people are also?? (2 Pet. 2:4). They will both received a similar eternal fate in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41).

Conditions in Hades

The story that Jesus told about two men (the Rich Man and Lazarus) helps to give us some insight into the conditions in Hades.

1. The Rich man was in Hades in Torment! (Luke 16:22-23)

**2. Lazarus was in "Abraham's Bosom" where he was comforted!
(Luke 16:22, 25)**

Both went into the Hadean realm, but one was comforted (Paradise) and the other tormented (Tartarus)(Lk. 16:19-31). It is also significant that there is a great gulf between these two so that there is no crossing back and forth (Luke 16:25-26). Evidently, there is no second chance after death! May we suggest the following:

- 1. All go to Hades upon death.**
- 2. There is a conscious existence of the spirit.**
- 3. The Righteous are comforted.**
- 4. The Unrighteous are tormented.**
- 5. They retain their identities.**
- 6. They are able to communicate and recognize one another.**
- 7. People are still on earth.**
- 8. But no return nor communication is allowed with the living.**
- 9. They retain their memory.**
- 10. They are awaiting Judgment.**

Conclusion

From the above information, may we suggest the following thoughts:

- 1. Those who are in torment in Hades don't want their loved ones to go there!**
- 2. Those who are in comfort in Hades have a very joyous place to await for the resurrection and would like for all whom they know to be there with them.**
- 3. Everyone makes the choice where they want to go upon death by the way they live upon earth.**

Consider these Scriptures: Job 14:20-22; Eccl. 9:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:18-20; 4:6; Heb. 4:1-6; 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. The spirit apart from our body is said to be dead.
- ___ ___ 2. A "spirit" cannot exist without some kind of a body.
- ___ ___ 3. The Old Testament Scriptures gave no indication of an existence of the "spirit" after the dead of the body.
- ___ ___ 4. When Jesus pointed out that God is the God of the living he stated that God is obviously not the God of those who are dead.
- ___ ___ 5. The Bible talks about the body sleeping after death, but not the spirit.
- ___ ___ 6. When the Old Testament says that the "spirit" returns to God, it means that God can re-use that "spirit" again.
- ___ ___ 7. Jesus did not have a "spirit" like we do; and that is the reason His "spirit" could go to God.
- ___ ___ 8. Hades and Sheol are neutral terms and have reference to the same thing.
- ___ ___ 9. Paradise and Tartarus are more specific "places" that the "spirit" goes upon death.
- ___ ___ 10. The fallen Angels are said to be held captive in the place called "Tartarus!"
- ___ ___ 11. In reality, both the "Rich man" and "Lazarus" were in Hades.
- ___ ___ 12. To be in a place of comfort is not to be in a place of torment.
- ___ ___ 13. All human beings that die go to Hades with no exceptions.
- ___ ___ 14. In the "spirit world" we will retain all of our memory.
- ___ ___ 15. There is an indication that we will recognize one another even in the "spirit world."

Lesson Three

"Why a Resurrection?"

(1 Cor. 15:42)

God has ordained that all shall die (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:27); but, He has also ordained that all men will be raised from the dead (John 5:28-29). It does not say "some," but "all" will be raised! The "all" here is talking about those who have died—all of these will be raised. Obviously, those still alive at Jesus' return will not be "raised," but "changed!" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Most references in the New Testament that speak about the resurrection are explaining what will happen to the Child of God. We know that all will be raised, but we do not know for certain (it may be inferred) how the unrighteous will be raised or changed. This is the mistake of those who teach a doctrine called "the Rapture"—because 1 Thess. 4:13-17 is only talking about the righteous. It does not say what will happen with the unrighteous. They have built a doctrine on their imagination, not the Scriptures. There are several general passages that indicate that there will be a resurrection of both—at the same time! John 5:28-29 states—"*the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth.*" Acts 24:15 states: "*There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.*"

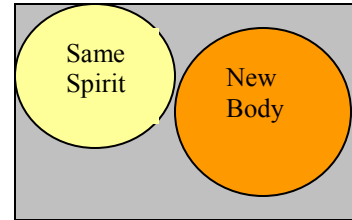
**These Graves Will be Empty**

Every grave yard will give up their dead, as well as the Sea! (Rev. 20:13). That which went into the grave was our physical body. The resurrection is talking about raising up our bodies. "*And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be.*" (1 Cor. 15:37).

Just like a grain of corn, it is planted in the ground, but it comes forth a new plant to produce corn. But, the identity is there! Our physical bodies constantly change over the years, but it is still our physical body. The identity is still there. So it will be with our resurrected body, the identity will be there. If God is able to make all kinds of bodies—of men, animals, fish, birds, celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies, etc.; then, why can't He also make us a new body fit for our eternal abode! (1 Cor. 15:35-41).

The "Spirit of Life" in a New Body

Just as God placed within the physical body of Adam the "spirit or breath of life"; so, again, God will place **our** "spirit or breath of life" into **our** new body. This "new body" is described in various ways in 1 Cor. 15:42-44. Notice the terminology:



v. 42—Sown in corruption—raised in incorruption.

v. 43—Sown in dishonor—raised in glory.

v. 43—Sown in weakness—raised in power.

v. 44—Sown a natural body—raised a "spiritual" body.

The Apostle also says that we will bear the image of the heavenly Man (v. 49). He also makes it very clear that **"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"** (v. 50). So, we will have a new body that will clothe our spirit (soul). The Apostle states this new body is:

1. "a building from God" (2 Cor. 5:1)
2. "a house not made with hands" (v. 1)
3. "eternal in the heavens" (v. 1)

But what is this "spiritual body" like? (1 Cor. 15:44). One insight that we have been given is found in Phil. 3:21—**"Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body."** Our old body will be raised and transformed into an immortal, glorified, powerful body—fit for a spiritual existence with God forever.

Our Assurance of a Resurrection

We have recorded by inspiration of God the actual resurrection of those who had died. However, these were resurrected to a life that was still "mortal." They would die again.

1. 1 Kgs. 17:20-23—Elijah raised the Son of the Widow of Zarephath to life by the power of God.
2. 2 Kgs. 4:18-37—Elisha raised the Son of a Shunamite woman to life by the power of God.
3. 2 Kgs. 13:21—A dead man who was thrown into the grave of Elisha and touched his bones was raised back to life.
4. Luke 7:13-16—Jairus' daughter was raised by Jesus.
5. Luke 8:55—Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain.
6. John 11:23-44—Jesus raised Lazarus.

7. Matt. 27:52—Many "nameless saints" were raised by God after Jesus was raised. Jesus was the "first-fruits." (1 Cor. 15:20).
8. Acts 9:36-41—Peter raised Tabitha back to life.
9. Acts 20:9-12—Paul raised Eutychus back to life.

All of these were raised to live again, but in a world of sin, sorrow, tears, and pain; and then, to **die again!** But they clearly demonstrate the great power of God to give new life to our mortal bodies.

But the **resurrection of Jesus** is our greatest assurance of our coming resurrection. The Apostle Peter stated that Christians have been begotten again to a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** (1 Peter 1:3-4). And God has given to us ample evidence and proof of the Resurrection of Jesus!

1. The Old Testament prophesies of the coming Messiah that would be put to death, but raised up from the dead (Isaiah 53, Psalms 16, Acts 2:25-31).
2. Jesus, Himself, foretold of His coming death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21).
3. The empty tomb of Jesus furnished great proof to people then, as well as now.
4. The appearances of Jesus gave plenty of evidence to the ones who would preach His Message to mankind.
 - a) To the disciples upon different occasions (Acts 1:3).
 - b) To some women twice (John 20:11-18; Matt. 28:9).
 - c) To individuals—Peter, James, two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Mk. 16:12; 1 Cor. 15:4-7).
 - d) To over 500 brethren at once (1 Cor. 15:6).
 - e) To Saul (Paul) last of all (1 Cor. 15:8).
5. Saul's (Paul's) changed life can only be explained by His belief in the resurrection of Jesus. After seeing Him, he turned immediately from being a Persecutor to being a Proclaimer!
6. The existence of the church through all of these centuries is evidence of a belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Conclusion

Christ's resurrection and our resurrection are inseparably tied together. A denial of one is a denial of the other. A belief in one is a belief in the other. The evidence is there for us to believe in both. When we face death, this hope will give great assurance to us.

Consider these Scriptures: Heb. 2:7-9; 1 Cor. 6:3.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. God has ordained that all men will die, but not all men will die.
- ___ ___ 2. God has ordained that all men will be raised, but not all men will be raised.
- ___ ___ 3. There will not be a "rapture" of Christians.
- ___ ___ 4. There is more than one general resurrection of mankind.
- ___ ___ 5. Every grave yard will someday be empty of all human bodies.
- ___ ___ 6. It must be important for our "spirit" to be "clothed upon" in our next existence after death.
- ___ ___ 7. The seed of corn helps to illustrate the resurrection of our bodies.
- ___ ___ 8. Our "New" spirit will be placed in our "New" body in the day of the resurrection
- ___ ___ 9. A "spiritual body" is merely a "spirit" being clothed by a "spirit."
- ___ ___ 10. We do not know anything about Jesus' glorious body.
- ___ ___ 11. All the resurrections mentioned in the Bible were to show the power of God to raise up a dead person.
- ___ ___ 12. The resurrection of Jesus not only shows God's power, but to give us assurance of what our resurrection will be like.
- ___ ___ 13. There is no statement in the Old Testament about the Messiah being raised from the dead.
- ___ ___ 14. Paul's changed life serves as one of the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus.
- ___ ___ 15. The death of Jesus on the cross becomes meaningless if there is no resurrection.

Lesson Four

"Why a Judgment?"

(Rom. 14:10-12)

An important question needs to be raised concerning the resurrection of all of mankind that we studied about in our previous lesson. *"If all are to be raised, then what advantage is there in being a Christian?"* I believe that this lesson will clearly answer this question. Notice that in both places where a general resurrection of **"both"** are mentioned, there is a clear-cut clue to why the resurrection is extremely important to the Christian....and obviously will not be important to the non-Christian.

"I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts 24:15). ***"The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*** (Jn. 5:28-29) It is easy to see why the resurrection is so meaningful to the Christian—he is raised up unto eternal life. ***"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (1 Cor. 15:57).

Who will be Judged?

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10). The Apostle states in 2 Cor. 5:10 that all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad! The apostle warns in verse 11, ***"Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."*** (2 Cor. 5). This clearly shows that both the good and the bad will be judged. But this raises another question: *"How do we know for sure that God will judge all mankind?"* We often judge people's words by their actions of the past! We are encouraged to do the same with God. He even inspired men to do so. Peter gives a list of past actions by God in this regard:

1. The punishment of the angels that sinned (2 Pet. 2:4)
2. The punishment of the world in Noah's day by a world-wide flood (2 Pet. 2:5).
3. The Punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:6)

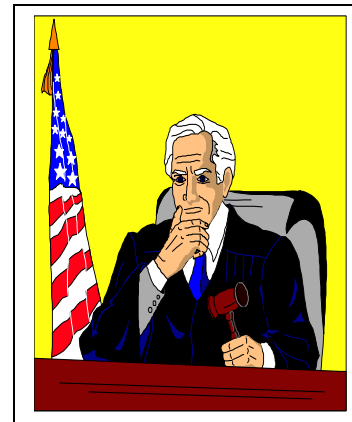
Jude, the Lord's brother, did the same thing (Jude 1:5-11). One of the obvious reasons for recording the judgment of God upon the ungodly is to warn us today that God is true to His Word! The Hebrew writer, after listing examples, states: ***It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*** (Heb. 10:31) (Unprepared, that is!)

Why a Final Judgment?

It would seem to be quite obvious that mankind is already under judgment even while he is living on earth. He is either saved or lost, a child of God or not, right with God or in rebellion against God, etc. He has even punished people openly for their sins even here—before a Judgment Day! So, what is the point of a "Day of Judgment" where all mankind will be brought before the Lord?

When Jesus came to earth the first time, He stated: ***"I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."*** (Jn. 12:47). Yet, many felt the sting of His words of warning about the punishment of God that would come on the disobedient and disbelieving (Matt. 23). Jesus judged the leaders of the Jewish people to be religious hypocrites. He ended this chapter with a strong, but sad, rebuke (and judgment) (v. 37-39). And yet, His primary reason for coming was to offer eternal life as a possibility for mankind. And on that basis, He came calling men to repentance.

But Jesus will come again, some day, and this time He will come to be the judge of all. All of the physical punishments that God brought upon sinful men were only partial—not complete! He wants us to learn from these physical judgments so that we will not receive the terrible final judgment of God some day (Matt. 16:27). Jesus' resurrection is an assurance that this judgment will come (Acts 17:31).



Facts About this Judgment

1. God will judge through Jesus (Heb. 12:23; Jn 5:22). Who better to judge than the God-Man?
2. It will be according to Righteous-ness (Rev. 20:12; Jn.12:48; Rom. 2:2). It will not be perverted, unfair, nor unreasonable.
3. It will be an awesome sight and experience for mankind. (Rom. 14:10-12). Every knee will bow before Him and every tongue will confess to the glory of God!

But back to our original question: "Why a final Judgment Day?" Three things would seem to be obvious to my mind. Make your own evaluation upon what you can see some Scriptures indicate. Please notice:

1. **To help all men see themselves in the true light!** Man has the power of

memory even after death (Lk. 16:25). We retain a record of all our actions and thoughts, possibly. In judgment, God just has to revive it to our consciousness. It seems that our conscience voluntarily anticipates punishment for wrong deeds. It will amount to a self-revelation and a self-condemnation when our lives are compared to God's Truth. Man's thoughts and deeds develop into the character of the person. Our character will reveal our past thoughts and actions. Our character will then be judged on the basis of God's Truth. Thus, man's true condition of his soul will be fully made manifest in judgment. (Matt. 15:19-20). God's justice will be made obvious to all. The righteous person will be upheld and the unrighteous person will be shown for what they really are.

2. To see that Justice is full carried out and complete. Not all wrongs are punished, even here on earth. And...not all right actions are recognized by others as they should be. God's justice will make all known and clear (Rom. 2:16).

3. To pronounce the Final verdict upon mankind! Men often misjudge others as well as themselves. It is usually because of hardness of heart, an impenitent heart, or a deceived heart that causes men to make wrong judgments—especially about themselves. (Rom. 2:5-6). There is only one who can give the full and final righteous judgment—God!

Conclusion

We are being judged every day by our thoughts and actions. We are even judging ourselves every day as well. Every honest person knows that he will be judged someday by God. Those who are not honest about this matter are only deceiving themselves. When the Apostle Paul preached to Felix (A Roman Governor in Palestine), the Scriptures recorded his reaction: *"as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid..."* (Acts 24:25). There was good reason for his fearfulness—he was not prepared for judgment and he knew it! What about our lives—are we prepared?

God gives us time here to turn to Him, listen to Him, believe in Him, become obedient to Him, and to live an obedient, faithful, and righteous life before Him. It is amazing that God will forgive us on such simple terms (Acts 2:38) as we begin our walk with Him; and, that he will continue to do so as we walk in the light of His Word (1 Jn. 1:7-10). God's mercy is amazing, wonderful, and inexhaustible NOW! But in the Day of Judgment, there will be no mercy—only justice!

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. Since both the just and unjust will be raised some day, there seems to be no advantage of being a Christian.
- ___ ___ 2. There is no reason for the faithful Christian to be judged by God because he is under the grace of God.
- ___ ___ 3. It is right to judge people's words by their actions of the past.
- ___ ___ 4. The punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah is used as an example of God's Word being true.
- ___ ___ 5. There is no need of a final judgment since mankind is already judged as being saved or lost.
- ___ ___ 6. Jesus' first coming was for the purpose of saving mankind, but his second coming will be to judge mankind.
- ___ ___ 7. Jesus, during his public ministry, did not pronounce any judgment on anyone.
- ___ ___ 8. Jesus' resurrection is man's assurance of a Judgment Day.
- ___ ___ 9. God, the Father, will judge in the last Day.

- ___ ___ 10. Man, usually, does not really see himself as he is in the sight of God.
- ___ ___ 11. Man's character will be judged by God's truth.

- ___ ___ 12. Justice is very often not completely carried out in this world.
- ___ ___ 13. Man's messed-up heart is what causes him to make wrong judgments about himself.
- ___ ___ 14. We are being judged every day by our thoughts and actions.
- ___ ___ 15. God's mercy is always extending to men who will listen and believe His Word.

Lesson Five

"Is There Reward for the Righteous?"

(Rev. 14:8-13)



Two well-known men in the 1800s had a well-publicized debate on Atheism. The two men were Campbell (a Christian) and Owen (an Atheist). Mr. Owen met with Mr. Campbell at Bethany, WV, to arrange for the debate. That evening as they strolled over the farm they came to the family burial grounds. Mr. Owen stated: *"There is one advantage I have over the Christian—I am not afraid to die at any moment--and" if some few items of my business were settled, I would be perfectly willing to die at any moment."* Mr.

Campbell's reply was: *"You say you have no fear in death; have you any hope in death?"* After a solemn pause, Mr. Owen answered, *"NO."* Mr. Campbell then reminded him, *"Then,"* pointing to an ox standing in the shade, whisking off flies, *"you are on the level with that brute. He has fed until he is satisfied, and there he stands in the shade, and has neither fear nor hope in death."* Mr. Owen made no attempt to answer.

Is it the lot of our existence to be like that brute beast—neither fear nor hope in death? Is it just to live a short time and die with no hope of anything beyond this existence? In the words of Job: *"If a man dies, shall he live again?"* Our study thus far indicates strongly that there is hope for the person who will turn to God in faithful obedience and submission to His Will.

Reasons for Believing in Heaven

1. Because of what Jesus has said! He came down from heaven to live among men (Jn. 1:1, 14). While here, He promised to have a place prepared for us someday when He returns (Jn. 14:1-2). If He has been there, He ought to know about it! He has given us insights to this place by using descriptive terms:

- a) Life without end in the presence of God (Matt. 25:46).
- b) A place of glory (2 Cor. 4:17).
- c) A place of Rest (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 14:13).
- d) A new world different from this one to exist in (2 Pet. 3:13).
- e) A place of great reward (Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:8).

2. Because of conditions that have to be faced in this life.

- a) Our life here on earth is short (Jas. 4:14) and without the hope of heaven, it is all over in a very short time. Is that the purpose for our existence?
- b) There is also the wickedness that we have to deal with here on earth. The world became so wicked at one time that God had to destroy all but eight souls. Wickedness often reigns among mankind. Morals are continually lowered to the level of beast. Honesty and truth are compromised and laughed at. Man needs to have hope of something better than this (Matt. 5:10-12).
- c) Then, there are the trials and tribulations of life itself. Life, for many, is often filled with *"Blood, Sweat, and Tears!"* There is the struggle to survive (Matt. 6:33). There are the many temptations we have to deal with constantly throughout our lives (Jas. 1:2-4). Then, there are the calamities that often befall us sooner or later. Such calls to mind what Jesus said: ***"Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."*** What a blessing to have hope in such circumstances of life.

3. Because it is the Greater of the Two Choices. The choice is between Heaven or Hell (Matt. 25:46). Hell is designed for punishment for those who do not turn to God in faithful obedience (Rom. 6:23). Heaven is designed for the rewarding of the faithful of God. This hope is held out to all men to accept: ***"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."*** (2 Cor. 5:20). The contrast between the two certainly makes Heaven far more desirable. Heaven is obviously the far better choice to make.

4. Because of the blessings Heaven offers. The following passages of Scripture will give an indication of these:

- a) Rev. 21:5—***"Behold, I make all things new."***
- b) 2 Pet. 3:13—***"...look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."***
- c) 1 Pet. 1:4—***"to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."***
- d) 1 Cor. 15:42-44—Our raised bodies will be:
 - ◇ Incorruptible
 - ◇ Glorified
 - ◇ Powerful
 - ◇ And prepared for our eternal existence with God.
- e) 1 Thess. 4:17—***"...always be with the Lord."***

The desirability is seen in these terms: New, Unchanging, Complete holiness, Complete satisfaction. There will be no more pain, tears, death, persecution, crippling diseases, etc. Who wouldn't want to go to Heaven! The following passages give us encouragement as well:

Phil. 1:23—"***For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.***" Paul's choice was to either remain on earth and be of service to mankind or go on to his reward. He knew the second choice was far better for him.

1 Cor. 2:9—"***Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.***" It is believed that about the time Paul wrote these words he was given the opportunity to look at "Paradise!" Unfortunately, he was not allowed to tell us all about it....but he certainly wanted to go there!

Luke 6:23—"***Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven.***" Sounds pretty exciting to get to go there!

Conclusion

The obvious choice for all of us is to believe in and want to go to Heaven! Why shouldn't everyone want to go there! But going to Heaven is not without a cost! And this is where the problem comes in—the willingness to pay the cost! The cost is spelled out clearly: "***If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.***" (Matt. 16:24). Jesus must become the Lord of my life—what He says, I must do! This is the reason why Jesus insisted: "***Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.***" (Matt. 18:3).

Some feel that they can set their own cost for going to Heaven, but they are only deceiving themselves. Only God can and has set the price. It still stands! Are we willing to pay the cost?

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. Man can choose to be like the beast that has no fear in death nor hope of reward or punishment after death.
- ___ ___ 2. Any one can make the claims that Jesus made and get a following.
- ___ ___ 3. Jesus has an advantage over the rest of mankind for He has been in Heaven before He came to earth.
- ___ ___ 4. A good reason why we shouldn't have "heaven on earth" is that we would not see the need to go to Heaven after this life is over.
- ___ ___ 5. Wickedness on earth has nothing to do with our wanting to go to Heaven.
- ___ ___ 6. Trials and tribulations help to prepare us for Heaven.
- ___ ___ 7. Jesus calls people to follow Him because they have no real burdens to bear.
- ___ ___ 8. The Apostles looked upon themselves as "ambassadors" for Christ.
- ___ ___ 9. This present Heavens and Earth are to be renovated for our future existence.
- ___ ___ 10. The Bible does not say that our new body will be one of power.
- ___ ___ 11. The Apostle Paul had "sight" assurance of what Heaven would be like.
- ___ ___ 12. Jesus says that we will leap for joy when we get to Heaven.
- ___ ___ 13. There is a definite cost on man's part if he is to make it to Heaven.
- ___ ___ 14. Jesus made it clear that people must be converted if they make it to Heaven.
- ___ ___ 15. The cost of going to Heaven has been the same from the beginning of time.

Lesson Six

"Is There Punishment for the Unrighteous?"

(Matt. 25:30-32, 34, 41)

In past years a survey was made of 500 preachers in various religious groups. Out of all the questions that were asked, we want to look at only four of them:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Is there life after death? | 8% (NO) | 92% (YES) |
| 2. Is there a Judgment Day? | 29% (NO) | 61% (YES) |
| 3. Is there a Hell? | 69% (NO) | 31% (YES) |
| 4. Is there a Heaven? | 41% (NO) | 59% (YES) |

Please keep in mind that these are men who are preachers, who are supposed to believe in God and in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Have you ever noticed that the question is never asked: "*Do you believe in Death?*" I believe the reason is obvious—Death is something we can see, witness with our own eyes. But the above questions are matters of faith—belief! Something unseen by human eyes can still be real or unreal to us if we believe or disbelieve the evidence. When we talk about a place of Punishment after this life is over, it is a matter of faith! Then, the next natural question we could ask is: "**Why should anyone believe in Hell?**"

It is not really a question of wanting to believe, but why should one believe there is a Hell?

Reasons for Believing there is a Hell

1. **Common sense says so!** Every society or nation punishes the Law-breaker! When proper officials will not punish, we resent them for not doing their job. When they punish the Law-abiding citizen, we again resent them. The very concept proves we all believe in proper punishment for wrongdoing. Granted, we also believe in degrees, depending upon the crime. But nevertheless, we believe in punishment, and even severe punishment. Rom. 13:1-5 admonishes us to be in subjection to governing bodies. They are not only ordained of God, but ordained to punish the wrong doer. But man is limited in his ability to punishment in comparison to God (Matt. 10:28).
2. **Belief in God demands it!** Belief in God makes one aware that he must do right (Rom. 1:18-20, 32). If he does not, he is to be punished. Thus, on the basis of belief in God, man is called upon to repent or perish (Acts 17:29-31).
3. **Belief in Jesus demands it!** The Greek word "Gehenna" that is translated "Hell" occurs 12 times in the New Testament. It is the concept used to describe future punishment. Jesus used it eleven out of 12 times Himself. One cannot consistently believe in Jesus and not believe in "Hell."

Even Jesus' death on the cross for man's redemption tells us clearly that future punishment (Hell) is real or why else did He die?

4. **Belief in a Judgment Day demands it!** Why have a Judgment Day, if there is no punishment? (Heb. 9:27) Why threaten people with Judgment, if there is no Hell? (2 Cor. 5:10-11). To believe in a Judgment Day is to believe in Hell!
5. **Belief in the Word of God demands it!** The Bible plainly teaches that there is a Hell! (Heb. 10:28-31). Jesus states that there is something worse than dying a physical death (Matt. 10:28).

Thus, we could conclude that to deny Hell is to also deny: Common Sense, God, Christ, Judgment, and the Word of God! If these things are so obvious, what is the problem with people not believing in Hell?

Why People Do not Want to Believe in Hell

1. Because of its terribleness! It is described in such vivid terms that it becomes obvious—not one should want to go there! It is described as:

- a) Being cast into a "lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15)
- b) Being cast into "outer darkness." (Matt. 22:13)
- c) It will be where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth for

anguish and torment (Matt. 22:13; Luke 16:24).

The above are vivid ways of communicating the terribleness of Hell. But the real description of Hell is given in 2 Thess. 1:9: ***"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."*** What will it be like to be away from the presence of the Lord? The above tries to help us see how terrible it will be—if we will listen! Jesus' cry: ***"My God, My God; why hast thou forsaken me?"*** should give some idea of what it truly means to be separated from God for all eternity.

2. Because of the Length of Hell! If this punishment was annihilation—who would dread it? Jesus said it will be something greater than physical death. Scriptures indicate that this punishment is:

- a) Matt. 25:46—***"...everlasting punishment."***
- b) 2 Thess. 1:7-9—***"punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"***
- c) Mark 9:43—***"...go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched..."***

The concept of everlasting is that it is on, and on, and on, and on, with no stated end in view.

3. Because of who the Bible says will be punished. Some of the ones mentioned are basically expected, but some are mentioned that many people have much reservation about. Look at the following list of those that are to be punished:

1. The Devil and His Angels (Matt. 25:41).
2. The uncaring, disobedient to God (Matt. 25:41-43).
3. Those that know not God and do not obey the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9).
4. The Immoral (Rom. 1:28-32).
5. The Religiously deceived (Matt. 7:21-23).
6. The unfaithful and unfruitful child of God (Matt. 25:30; John 15:6).

4. Because such threatened Punishment is unjust. Questions are asked that seems to infer that such is unjust—see the following:

1. Could God's love allow His creatures to suffer forever?
2. Doesn't God have compassion upon suffering humanity?
3. Would not God put suffering humanity out of their misery rather than let them suffer forever?

It might be helpful to see what this loving, kind, merciful God has done in the past:

1. He has allowed misery and suffering in our world from the time of Adam...and how ghastly, at times, has been this misery and suffering.
2. Why hasn't this loving God ended all this suffering?
3. Why did He even create man in the first place—knowing what would happen and how man's sins would bring on all his miseries.
4. If suffering is so inconsistent with God's love, why even create man to start with?
5. It might help to remember that Jesus (who die for us) was the One who used "Gehenna" 11 or the 12 times in the Scriptures.
6. It might help also to remember that Jesus was the One that told the story of the Rich Man being in Torment (Luke 16:23).

Conclusion

If these objections could be erased, there would be no real problem with believing in Hell. It is easy to reject what you don't want to believe that is plainly stated in the Bible; or, even to rationalize them away—not caring what the Bible says. But...the Word of God is very clear on this matter—**THERE IS A HELL!** While Hell is described as terrible—it is more terrible that intelligent people will not listen to God's warning of the great punishment coming upon the disbelieving and disobedient.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ ___ 1. More people believe in some kind of existence after death than they believe in Heaven or Hell.
- ___ ___ 2. It is obvious from surveys that are taken that most preachers do not believe that the Bible is the Inspired Word of God.
- ___ ___ 3. Most people would prefer not to believe that God will punish man in Hell (as described in the Bible).
- ___ ___ 4. The Laws of men require punishment for breaking their Laws.
- ___ ___ 5. A belief in God logically demands a belief in punishment.
- ___ ___ 6. Jesus used the word "Gehenna" (Hell) all 12 times in the New Testament in His personal teaching on earth.
- ___ ___ 7. The death of Jesus on the Cross clearly shows that Hell is a reality.
- ___ ___ 8. There is no point to threatening people with judgment if there is no Hell.
- ___ ___ 9. Jesus plainly teaches that there is something worse than dying a physical death.
- ___ ___ 10. People do not want to believe in Hell because it is too terrible.
- ___ ___ 11. The length of punishment is not the real hindering point.
- ___ ___ 12. I could possibly believe in Hell if I knew I would not go there.
- ___ ___ 13. Man has no way of measuring the justness or unjustness of Hell.
- ___ ___ 14. If God allows terrible misery here and now, then He will also allow misery forever.
- ___ ___ 15. It is terrible that intelligent people will not listen to the warnings of God.

