

The Intermediate State

Luke 16:19-17:1

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "Then 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 in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' 29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"
NKJV

Last week we looked at life after death and we said that God has built into man knowledge that he has a spiritual part that lives beyond the grave. We also said that when it comes to understanding this, that science has nothing factual to say. Everyone has their own opinions but those are only opinions.

Today we want to take a closer look at what happens at the point of death. In the account that Jesus gives us in Luke's gospel we have an excellent and unparalleled testimony of what happens after death.

Now I know that what you have always believed may not be what you will hear in this message, but nevertheless it is what the Bible teaches.

I remember my youngest sister once asking me that if when we die that we become angels. The answer is no! Now I know that many people think that and some pictures and books seem to indicate that but it is not true. The angels are beings created before the world and physical universe were created. In the book of Job they are referred to as the Sons of God.

God is speaking to Job. Job 38:4-7 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? NKJV

Jesus said that we would be as the angels of heaven, not the angels of heaven.

Heb 1:13-14 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? NKJV

But what does Jesus say to us in this passage about our life after death.

I. There is a conscience existence after death.

A. This rules out soul sleep.

1. Even though Paul often speaks of the death of saints as a sleep he is referring only to the body and not the soul.
 - a. 2 Cor 5:6-8 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. NKJV
 - b. Phil 1:21-23 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. NKJV
 - c. Paul refers to the Old Testament saints as alive and conscious in Heb 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, NKJV
2. Jesus himself referred to the death of Lazarus of John 11 as him sleeping. But it was the body that Jesus referred to for that is what He raised from the dead.
 - a. But what did Jesus tell the thief on the cross?
 - b. Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." NKJV
3. In the Revelation we find that those who have been put to death are alive and crying to God.
 - a. Rev 6:9-11
 - b. When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the

number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. NKJV

4. And look at Dan 12:2
 - a. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. NKJV
 - b. It is clear that it is the body that is being referred to in this passage.
 - c. There is to be a resurrection of the bodies of all people of all history.
- B. This rules our unconsciousness.
 1. The rich man knows where he is.
 2. He is aware of his sufferings and Lazarus' lack of suffering.
 3. He is aware of Abraham and Lazarus together even though there is a great gulf between them.
 4. This is certainly not a state of non existence or unconsciousness.
- C. We will be able to remember our previous existence.
 1. He is reminded of his previous life and even that of Lazarus.
 2. He is reminded how he prospered in his life here on earth.
 3. He is reminded that the beggar who laid at his gate day after day, Lazarus had suffered without comfort or compassion from anyone.
- II. Upon death the saints are escorted to what Jesus called paradise.
 - A. We will not get lost and wonder on earth seeking rest.
 1. God sends those ministering spirits to bring us to Jesus.
 2. There is another whole beyond our physical senses.
 3. This world is filled with innumerable spirits, evil and good, Satanic and Godly.
 4. But God preserves His saints.
 5. We can be assured that His children are ushered into the presence of Jesus when they pass from this world.
 - B. Neither will those who have lived sinful lives be free to roam the earth.

1. Else the rich man would have gone back to his five brothers himself.
2. He would have haunted them and told them to mend their ways.
3. But alas. Once we arrive we cannot change course.

III. We will know and communicate with those who have gone on before.

A. One of the hopes that we all have is to meet with our loved ones who have ventured on before us.

1. When David's infant son died, David knew that his son was alright and that one day he would go to be with him.
 - a. 2 Sam 12:23 "But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."
2. People in the Old Testament are often said to have been "gathered to his people" when they died even if they were buried thousands of miles apart.
 - a. See Gen 25:8 concerning Abraham's death.
 - b. Gen 25:7-9 This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. 8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah NKJV
3. It is not the bodies that are gathered together but the spirit that was gathered to his people.

B. So it is with the rich man, he can communicate with Abraham and even Lazarus even though we have no direct conversation between them.

1. They all recognize each other.
2. He knows that his brothers are still alive on earth.
3. He knows of their sinful lives without God.

IV. There can be either suffering or comfort, one or the other, for the departed.

A. As we said last week, there is no third place.

1. Now some teach that there is a place where the dead go and suffer until they have made atonement for their wrongs.
2. But that is not what Abraham said.

- a. He did not say just wait a few hundred years and then you be with us over here.
 - b. He did not tell him it would be best if his five brothers prayed for him so that he would the sooner get out of there.
 - c. Instead, Abraham told him that there was no escape.
 - d. There was not so many years and out on good behavior.
 - e. That is why this life is so important, for there is no second chance.
- B. Jesus had more to say about hell and its suffering and the need to avoid it at any cost than He ever had to say about heaven.
- 1. Matt 5:29-30 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. NKJV
- V. There is knowledge of what is yet on earth.
- A. The rich man knows that his five brothers are still alive.
 - 1. He also knows that they will come to the same place of suffering if they continued in their sin.
 - 2. He knew that he did not want them to follow him there.
 - a. So goes the idea that hell is a great place where the wicked will continue their wickedness forever.
- VI. No one can move from one place to the other or even back to earth.
- A. There is no purpose for the dead to return to warn us of suffering after death.
 - 1. For we have the scriptures to tell us all that we need to know.
 - B. God uses angels to send messages to people and to communicate in special circumstances, not departed saints.
 - 1. When Mary found out that she was to have the Christ child, it was not her dead mother, father, grand-mother, grandfather, or aunt or uncle that brought her the message.
 - 2. In all the communication between God and people God always uses His angels.
 - C. So if someone offers to communicate with the dead they are either liars, or very wicked people.

1. Which ever they are you need to stay away from them.

God is the God of spirits as well as the God of the living. Never suppose that there are not laws and rules that govern the spirit world just as there are laws and rules that govern the material world.

Communicate with God through Jesus Christ. He is the only mediator between God and man. Not angels; not the spirits of departed saints nor any other spirit guide. Those things will only lead to bondage and death.

1 Tim 2: 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, NKJV