

Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:19-31)

I. Introduction

A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. The Death of People During Old Testament Times (Luke 16:19-31)
2. The Desire to Depart this Life (Philippians 1:21-26)
3. The Abode of the Condemned is no Place to Go. (Mark 9:41-50)
4. The Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46)
5. Jesus' Death on the Cross (Luke 23:26-43)

Question: Where do saved and unsaved people go when they die? What is the biblical definition of death? How do theologians know that "sheol" had separate compartments?

B. The Hebrew word "sheol" means a place of no return.

1. It was used sixty-five times in the Old Testament.
2. Thirty-one times, it meant hell.
3. Another thirty-one times, it meant grave.
4. The final three times, it meant pit.
5. During the Old Testament period, everyone that died went to "sheol" because "sheol" actually had separate compartments for the righteous and the unrighteous.

C. The biblical meaning of death

1. Death does not mean a total cessation of life.
2. Death means separation. **When Adam and Eve sinned, they were "separated" from the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life.**

D. Those compartments are made clear in Luke 16:19-24.

1. ***Because Lazarus' name was used, most theologians believe that Jesus was telling an actual account rather than a parable.***
2. The soul of Lazarus was on the righteous side, in Abraham's bosom or in Paradise.
3. The use of "sheol" revealed the anguish of dying lost. The soul of the rich man was in torment.
4. The rich man could see Lazarus, which made his torment even greater.
5. When we die, will we be able to see those that died lost? No, our soul will be in a different place.
6. Where are Lazarus and the rich man today?
 - a. **Luke 23:43 says**, "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."
 - 1) Today (**semeron**) - this very day.
 - 2) Paradise (**paradeisos - Greek**) - the part of Hades which was thought by the later Jews to be the abode of the souls of pious until the

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resurrection: but some understand this to be a heavenly paradise, the upper regions of the heavens ("sheol" - *Hebrew*).

- b. **Philippians 1:23 says**, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"
 - 1) When Paul considered death, the Holy Spirit gave him confidence that he would be with the Lord. **Actually, it is his soul that is currently with the Lord** (see I Corinthians 15:52).
 - 2) **Acts 1:11 says**, "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
 - a) Heaven (*ouranos*) - the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings.
 - b) Jesus left the disciples to go to heaven.
 - c) When Jesus died on the cross, His soul went to "sheol", and His body went to the grave. The soul of the man on the cross that died with Him is probably still in "sheol".
 - 3) The souls of Paul and all departed New Testament saints are with Jesus in heaven, but their bodies are in the grave.
 - a) **Matthew 27:51-52 says**, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,"
 - 1)) This event was only recorded by Matthew.
 - 2)) **Verse 53 indicates that they came out after His resurrection, not after His death.**
 - 3)) No one in this life knows for sure, but Dr. D. A. Carson hypothesized that the well-known Old Testament saints were the ones that rose, that they had translated bodies like Jesus rather than physical bodies like us, and that they did not have to return to their graves.
 - a)) Some of those saints are probably in Paradise **in resurrected form** with Jesus.
 - b)) The souls of many are probably still in "sheol" and their bodies in the grave.
 - b) Our soul does not go to "sheol". Our body does go to the grave.
 - 1)) Philippians 1:23 indicates that our soul will be with the Lord.
 - 2)) I Corinthians 15:51-55 indicates that our incorruptible body will be rejoined with our soul at the Rapture.
 - 3) We do not go into a form of soul sleep waiting for some kind of supernatural event, like the Rapture.

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c) **Like Lazarus, our soul will be conscious and aware of the surroundings.**

- c. The rich man is still in "sheol". **Revelation 20:14 says**, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."
- d. The souls of departed New Testament lost people are also in "sheol" with the rich man.
- e. The souls of departed New Testament saints are with Jesus.

Question: Many people do not believe in the existence of hell or that a loving God would send people there. How can we be sure that they are wrong?

II. The existence of hell.

- A. **Revelation 20:14 says**, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."
 - 1. Many people think that death is the end of a person's total existence and that there will not be any kind of life after death.
 - 2. Some accept reincarnation and the idea that life on this earth will be repeated until the individual finally gets it right and graduates into heaven.
 - 3. Some people believe in the existence of Purgatory, which is where they think the dead will go to work off their sins.
 - 4. Some people do not believe that God would let anyone die lost.
 - 5. Others think that life after death will be a pleasurable experience.
 - 6. Others believe that God will give everyone a second chance so that they can make the right decision about Him.
- B. What does the Bible say? None of the above beliefs about the after life are biblical, and Jesus did not subscribe to any of them.
 - 1. Jesus taught that hell is a real place, of real eternal torment.
 - 2. In Mark 9:41-50, He described it as a place where the fire never dims and the worm never dies.
 - 3. In Luke 16:19-31, He taught the reality of hell when He spoke about the rich man that had lived sumptuously all his life and then died without ever having put His trust in God.
 - a. Jesus often taught in parables. But on that occasion, He did not even try to infer that His story was a parable.
 - b. Hell is a real place.
 - c. Jesus never tried to represent it as anything else.
 - d. Hell was not created for humans.
 - e. Matthew 25:41 says that it was created for the devil and his angels.
 - 4. A better alternative to that place of eternal torment and doom is to embrace the finished work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary and go to the place where God's people will find rest from their labors and forever be with Him.

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Accepting Jesus is an individual choice, but not making that choice is the same as choosing to reject Him.

- C. Our ability to have the correct understanding about death depends upon our ability to accept the Bible as the true Word of God.
1. We can believe that the Bible is the true Word of God because of the resurrection. Without that, there would not be a Christian church today.
 2. We can believe that the Bible is the true Word of God because of the many saints that were martyred rather than admitting to some kind of fraudulent resurrection.
 3. We can believe that the Old Testament is the true Word of God because it was preserved and carefully copied by the Jews.
 4. We can believe that the New Testament is the true Word of God because of the many copies and fragments that have been retained through the centuries.

Question: Did the rich man die lost because he was rich? Does Mark 9:41-50 teach that a person can be lost by bad works? How do you know? Does Psalm 49:6-20 teach that a person can be lost by being rich? How do you know?

III. The Teaching of Mark 9:41-50 and Psalm 49:6-20.

- A. **Mark 9:41 says**, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."
1. This verse is not saying what will happen to someone that does not give a cup of water in Jesus' name.
 2. It is only saying what will happen for the person that does, and it is that he or she will not lose their reward.
 - a. Lose (*apollumi*) – metaphorically, to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell
 - b. Reward (*misthos*) - of the rewards which God bestows, or will bestow, upon good deeds and endeavours.
 3. Jesus was expressing a Jewish belief that a good deed to a Christian is the same as a good deed to Jesus.
 4. Our salvation is better described as something that we cannot earn, as a relationship, and as our absolute trust in the Lord.
 - a. **Ephesians 2:8-9 says**, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
 - b. **John 3:16 says**, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - c. **Acts 16:31 says**, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

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- B. Mark 9:42-50 advise a person to dismember themselves rather than die lost.
1. Jesus is not telling people to literally cut off their hands or feet or gouge out their eyes.
 2. He is trying to warn people about how bad it will be to die lost.
 3. He is telling people that hell is a real place.
 4. According to Dr. J. Vernon McGee, verses 44 and 46 are not in the better Greek manuscripts.
- C. Psalm 49:6-20 completes the general truth of both passages.
1. People die lost because they are distracted by their love of money.
 2. People die lost because their hands work works that keep them from the Lord.
 3. People die lost because their feet walk in places that keep them from the Lord.
 4. People die lost because their eyes behold paths that keep them from the Lord.
- D. **They do not die lost because of money, hands, feet, or eyes. They die lost because they never come to Jesus.**

Question: In Matthew 25:31-46, what actually happens when Jesus gathers the nations of the world? When does this judgment occur in future time?

IV. The Teaching of Matthew 25:31-46.

- A. According to Dr. Carson, verse 32 refers to all people rather than all nations literally.
1. Nations (*ethnos*) - a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus (the human race).
 2. In verse 33, the multitude will be split into two groups (sheep and goats).
 3. The sheep are saved. The goats are lost.
 4. **John 10:11 says**, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
- B. Remember Ephesians 2:8-9.
1. The sheep are not saved because they did good works.
 2. They did good works because they were saved.
 3. The good works are directly attributed to the Holy Spirit.
- C. The important teaching of this passage is in verse 41.
1. He is not telling the lost to prepare themselves to for the devil.
 2. He is saying that the everlasting fire was prepared for the devil and his angels.
 3. Hell was not established for human beings. Those that go there do so as intruders.

Question: How did Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection affect Abraham's bosom?

V. The affect of Jesus' death and resurrection on Abraham's bosom

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- A. The bodies and souls of some Old Testament saints are in heaven with Jesus (Matthew 27:51-53).
- B. The souls of some Old Testament saints are still in Abraham's bosom. Their bodies are still in the grave.
- C. The souls of the Old Testament departed lost are still in torment in "sheol" where they can still see those saints that remain in Abraham's bosom.
 - 1. **They are still begging for a drop of water to comfort their agony, but they are not getting any.**
 - 2. More than anything else, we should be stirred and motivated by the eternal agony of the departed lost.
 - 3. We need to be very vigilant about reaching the lost before it is too late for them.
 - 4. **However, we must GO in the strength and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit for our efforts to be fruitful.**
- D. The souls of New Testament saints are in heaven with Jesus (Philippians 1:23).
- E. The souls of the New Testament departed lost have joined the rich man in "hades" (Greek) or "sheol" (Hebrew).

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Next week's lesson: "The Cross of Jesus" (Leviticus 9:7-15, Isaiah 53:1-12, John 1:29-34, and John 19:25-30)

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Luke 23:26-43 and Isaiah 53:1-12
Tuesday:	Leviticus 9:7-15
Wednesday:	John 1:29-34
Thursday:	John 19:25-30
Friday:	John 14:1-6

Study questions:

1. Why did Jesus have to die in order for us to have a Savior?
2. What did Isaiah mean, in Isaiah 53:10, when he wrote that God was pleased to bruise Jesus?
3. Why did John the Baptist call Jesus the Lamb of God?
4. Jesus died so sinners can be saved, but how does a person get saved? How would you minister to someone that wants to get saved?
5. What was the significance of Jesus saying "it is finished"?
6. How would you explain to someone that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?
7. Do you think that Jesus will literally return to set up His millennial kingdom or only return figuratively?