

LESSON 8 - BIBLE TEACHING CONCERNING DEATH

"The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything; neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten; also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, are now perished: neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6).

THE clear, unmistakable teaching of Scripture concerning the death state is in perfect harmony with the subject matter of the previous lesson concerning the absolute mortality and frailty of mankind. Here again we must understand the Bible teaching to comprehend the principles and necessity of God's plan of salvation.

Unfortunately, the teaching of the Bible continues to part company with the teachings of mainstream Christianity on this vital subject. It is unfortunate because without the proper understanding of what the Bible actually teaches about the death state, it is not possible to appreciate the love of God in establishing a method of deliverance from death *by means of a resurrection* to newness of life. In fact, the traditional and popular conception of proceeding immediately to either heaven or hell at death, as reward or punishment, *removes the need for resurrection at all*, and makes void and meaningless all Bible references to this important subject.

"Death" has lost all its meaning if the dead are not really dead, but "gone before" and "praising God now in heaven." There is entire lack of scriptural evidence that the dead have gone anywhere, or are even so much as existing in some state of consciousness. But there is abundant proof to show they have gone to the grave, and are totally unconscious, and have become as though they never existed. For example -

"Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. " (Psalm 49:12, 20).

Death is the opposite of life. We know what life is by actual experience. "Death" is the word by which we describe the interruption or stopping of life. Life is manifested by the activities of breathing, circulation of blood, digestion. The heart, lungs and stomach provide activity which is called "life" in our bodies. Without these organs, this life is not present. If we shock our brain, we become insensible, and if we restrict our air supply, we suffocate. If we stop our food supply, starvation follows, and life ends. This process proves life depends on the organized arrangement of the functions of our bodies.

When we speak of animals, this is exactly how we use the terms

BibleKEY fact:

“ the traditional and popular conception of proceeding immediately to either heaven or hell at death removes the need for resurrection at all, and makes void and meaningless all Bible references to this important subject. ”

BibleKEY fact:

“ There is entire lack of scriptural evidence that the dead have gone anywhere, or are even so much as existing in some state of consciousness ”

BIBLE TEACHING CONCERNING DEATH

"life" and "death". In reference to them we have no difficulty with the clear obvious meanings of these words. The Scriptures say that in physical constitution, men and animals are the same: both are "living souls", "living creatures".

We must recognize that there was a time in the past when each one of us did not exist at all, when the organization of our bodies did not prevail: it therefore follows that a disorganization of our bodies will bring about a condition when again we will cease to exist:

"Dust thou art: to dust thou shalt return." (Genesis 3:19)

Death comes and reverses what began at our birth. Birth gave existence, death takes it away. How clearly we can see this in relation to the animals. We are just the same.

When the Bible speaks of the death of any of God's people, it NEVER says they have "gone to their reward", or "winged their way to glory", or any such idea. The Bible teaches a different doctrine, directly opposed to this. For instance, it records the deaths of the faithful fathers of the Jewish race in a manner that is clear and unmistakable -

Abraham: (Genesis 25:8)

"Abraham gave up the ghost (gava: expired, breathed out), and died, and was gathered to his people"

Isaac: (Genesis 35: 29).

"Isaac gave up the ghost (gava) and died, and was gathered to his people"

Jacob: (Genesis 49:33)

"Jacob . . yielded up the ghost (gava), and was gathered to his people"

Joseph: (Genesis 50:26)

"Joseph died . . and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin"

Moses: (Deuteronomy 34: 5)

"Moses died . and He (God) buried him in the land of Moab"

Of all those whose deaths are recorded in the Scriptures, they are never said to have gone away anywhere; but are always spoken of as *dying, giving up their life, and returning to the ground*, just as God said to Adam. Notice what is said of all the faithful by Paul:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off" (Hebrews 11:13).

When Jesus spoke of the death of Lazarus, he was equally clear -

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit, Jesus spake of his death . . Then said Jesus plainly, Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14).

BibleKEY fact:

“ Of all those whose deaths are recorded in the Scriptures, they are never said to have gone away anywhere; but are always spoken of as dying, giving up their life, and returning to the ground ”

BibleKEY word search:

"gave up the ghost" - definition - from Strongs Hebrew dictionary #1478 (Old Testament) **gava`**, (gaw-vah'); a primary root word meaning; to breathe out, i.e. (by implication) expire; **Translated in the KJV by the following words and/or phrases:** - die, be dead, give up the ghost, perish.

BIBLE TEACHING CONCERNING DEATH

How could Jesus possibly speak of Lazarus as being *asleep*, and needing to be *awakened*, if all the time he was wide awake in heaven, praising God?

Of Stephen, the Bible states similarly, when he died -

"He fell asleep" (Acts 7:60).

And when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the righteous who had died, to comfort them (surely one time above all others to tell them they were alive and happy in heaven!), he referred to their death as a *sleep*, and that they would be raised from the dead at the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) -

"I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope The Lord shall descend from heaven, and the dead shall rise"

There are *no* exceptions to these cases in the Bible record. The Bible always speaks of death as the ending of life, never as commencement of another state. The dead are always represented as unconscious, knowing nothing (except in two places: one a poetic figure - Isaiah 14:14; the other a parable using the Pharisees' own superstitions to teach an important lesson - Luke 16:19-31). In the plain, literal descriptions of Scripture, the dead are always spoken of as being in the "land of forgetfulness", "land of darkness", "silence", "destruction" and "unconsciousness". Solomon said -

"Whatsoever thy hand findest to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The patient man Job, in his distress of trial, said of the grave (Job 3:13-19) -

"There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together: they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master"

He had just before expressed the wish that he had died when he was an infant. He had said that he would have *"lain still and been quiet"* - **no reference to being in heaven** as is popularly taught. He said he should have -

"Slept, been at rest with kings and counselors, with infants that never saw light."

He further added, a little later on in his trial -

"Wherefore hast Thou brought me forth out of the womb? O that I had given up the ghost (gava: expired) and no eye had seen me: I should have been as though I had not been" (Job 10:18).

The inspired Psalmist David is equally plain (Psalm 88:10-12) -

"Shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Shall Thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or Thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall Thy wonders be know in the dark, and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

BibleKEY fact:

“ In the plain, literal descriptions of Scripture, the dead are always spoken of as being in the "land of forgetfulness", "land of darkness", "silence", "destruction" and "unconsciousness”

BibleKEY fact:

“ The Bible always speaks of death as the ending of life, never as commencement of another state ”

BIBLE TEACHING CONCERNING DEATH

The emphatic negative answer is provided by the same inspired pen (Ps. 115:17) -

"The dead praise not the Lord; neither any that go down into silence."

He stated that *life* is the time to serve the Lord, to do His will, to learn His Word and to sing His praises:

"While I live I will praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalm 146:2).

- clearly indicating that in David's mind, his being would cease with the event of death. Consider what Solomon with divine wisdom declared (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6) -

*"The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything: neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also **their love, and their hatred, and their envy, (i.e. capacity for thought) are now perished** neither have they any more a portion forever in anything under the sun."*

This had been previously emphasized by his father David -

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. For his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:3-4).

*"In death there is **no remembrance** of Thee: in the grave, who shall give Thee thanks?" (Psalm 6:5).*

This leaves no doubt as to the state of the dead. The whole purpose of an immortal soul is to have an existence with God; but this states that ***after death there is no remembrance of God!***

Hezekiah, righteous king of Judah, who was sick "nigh unto death," and had recovered, praised God in the following manner -

"The grave cannot praise Thee; death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth: the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day" (Isaiah 38:18-19).

The Bible teaches that death is the total eclipse of being, a complete stopping of our consciousness, a dreamless sleep in the "dust of the earth."

These things establish the absolute *necessity of the resurrection*, for in view of the preceding scriptures, the only reasonable conclusion that we can arrive at is that a future life is attainable **ONLY** by ***resurrection from the dead***. In every instance, popular belief with reference to the dead is exactly contrary to the clear statements of the Bible. There is not a single promise of heaven at death in the whole Bible; not a single hint that man has an "immortal soul", or anything else that lives on after death. The basic truth emphasized over and over is:

"THE DEAD KNOW NOT ANYTHING."

BibleKEY fact:

“ in David's mind, his being would cease with the event of death ”

BibleKEY fact:

“ the dead know not anything . . . their love, and their hatred, and their envy, (i.e. capacity for thought) are now perished . . . in that very day his thoughts perish . . . there is no remembrance of Thee ”

BIBLE TEACHING CONCERNING DEATH

Name Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address Postal Code

* You may need an additional sheet for your answers if there is not enough space below. Your answers to the following questions will help you - and us - to determine how much you have discovered about your Bible. Please return this form in the envelope provided even if you are unable to answer all the questions. On receipt of it we will forward a further study, as well as some

1. What effect does a belief in the conception of proceeding immediately to either heaven or hell at death have on the doctrine of resurrection?
2. What is the definition of "life"?
3. What do we understand about the meaning of death?
4. What began at our birth which is terminated at our death?
5. Does the Bible teach that we get a reward at the moment of our death?
6. What does the Bible say happened to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when they died?
7. How is the death of anyone described in the Bible?
8. What does Hebrews chapter 11 say concerning the faithful and their reward?
9. In what two ways did Jesus describe the death of Lazarus of Bethany?
10. How was the death of Stephen described in Acts 7:60?
11. The Bible speaks of the dead as being found in what locations or conditions?