

LESSON 9 - BIBLE TEACHING ABOUT HEAVEN & HELL

“Evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth . . . The meek shall inherit the earth” - Psalm 37:9-11.

"HELL" in the Bible means no more and no less than the grave. Heaven is God's throne. *"No man hath ascended to Heaven."* The EARTH is the reward promised to man: *"The meek shall inherit the EARTH "*. The scripture passages quoted in Lesson 8 showed us beyond any doubt that the dead are really dead, and in such a condition have obviously not experienced any state of reward or punishment, because they do not exist in any form of life or living. They simply sleep in the grave, awaiting the resurrection.

There is also not a *single promise* throughout the whole of Scripture of anyone going to heaven at *any time*. The promise is *always* a rejuvenated earth, filled with the glory of God. It is true that Peter speaks of -

"An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

This may *sound* as if our reward will be in heaven. Likewise Jesus said -

"Great is your reward in heaven . . . Lay up treasure in heaven" (Matthew 5:12; 6: 20).

Truly our reward is *now* "reserved in heaven," awaiting its bestowal at a time yet in the future. When a thing is reserved, it is kept in safety in a specified place until it is required, and then it is brought forth: like the Federal Reserve Banks which *keep in reserve* sufficient funds to insure local bank deposits, to be *brought forth* on demand. Thus Peter goes on to say a few verses later that the reserved reward is a -

"Salvation to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (v.13).

And Jesus says exactly the same -

"I come quickly, and my reward is WITH ME" (Revelation 22:12).

"Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection" (Luke 14:14).

And Paul gives the identical picture of reward when Christ comes -

"Jesus shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and Kingdom . . . a crown of righteousness is laid up for me which the righteous Judge shall give me in that day. . . and to all who love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:1-8).

Certainly reward doesn't come before judgment (though it appears that some denominations seem to think so).

By the fact that Christ brings the reward with him, and that he is now in heaven, it can be rightly stated that the reward is at present *reserved* in heaven. One aspect of the reward is rulership of the earth with Christ, as we shall see. That no man has been so rewarded at present is abundantly clear.

BibleKEY fact:

“ The scripture passages quoted in Lesson 8 showed us beyond any doubt that the dead are really dead, and in such a condition have obviously not experienced any state of reward or punishment, because they do not exist in any form of life or living. ”

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“ Truly our reward is now "reserved in heaven," . . . when a thing is reserved, it is kept in safety in a specified place until it is required, and then it is brought forth: like the Federal Reserve Banks which keep in reserve sufficient funds to insure local bank deposits, to be brought forth on demand. ”

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Consider the judgment scene in Matthew 25: 31-46 -

"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory"

- he *then* invites the righteous into his Kingdom. And consider also what he said in John 5:28-29, that the dead shall *come forth from the graves* to receive their reward of life or condemnation. How could that possibly be, if they are already recompensed in heaven or hell, ages before?

No descendant of Adam (except Christ himself) has ever been given, or even promised, entry into God's residence in "the heaven of heavens". Jesus said to Nicodemus -

"NO MAN hath ascended up to heaven" (John 3:13).

Of faithful David, the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," (referred to as a "man after God's Own heart"), it is specifically declared that *even he did not go to heaven*. Certainly if any would have attained to such an honor, it would have been David. What does the Bible say?

"The patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day . . . David is not ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:29-34).

The passage points to the fact of Christ's ascension to heaven as the proof that he is the Messiah. But if *all* the righteous go to heaven, then Christ's ascension proves nothing relative to this.

In full support of this is the long list of the faithful in Hebrews 11, which includes Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc. -

"These ALL, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39-40).

Here is an explicit statement that David and the others of the faithful have not yet received the promises, nor been "made perfect" and *will not till* all the later faithful with them receive it *together* (at the resurrection at the Last Day).

There are two individuals besides Christ who did not appear to experience death. Of Enoch, it is stated:

"Enoch was translated that he should not see death" (Hebrews 11:5).

And of Elijah: "He went up by a whirl wind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11).

"Heaven" is used in various senses ("birds of heaven," "rain from heaven"), and this "heaven" Elijah ascended to is clearly not the "heaven of heavens" of God's throne, for no man has ascended *there*, as we have seen. Where these two are we do not know. We are not told. They were exceptions: it appears from the Divine record that they did not die. What special provision God made for them, He has not revealed. Their exceptional case tells us nothing about those who *do* die.

When Jesus was comforting Martha about Lazarus (who had died), he did not tell her, as some would do today, that he was happy in heavenly glory; rather he encouraged her by saying, in true scriptural fashion:

*"Thy brother shall **rise again**" (John 11:23).*

What a strange and pointless thing to say, if Lazarus was alive in eternal bliss!

BibleKEY fact:

““ *"The patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day . . . David is not ascended into the heavens" ””*

BibleKEY fact:

““ *No descendant of Adam (except Christ himself) has ever been given, or even promised, entry into God's residence in "the heaven of heavens". Jesus said to Nicodemus - "NO MAN hath ascended up to heaven" ””*

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Paul taught as comfort the *same doctrine of the resurrection*. Apparently he did not know anything about the modern comfort, that the dead had gone to instant bliss. To the sorrowing believers at Thessalonica, he said (2 Thessalonians 4:13-18) -

"I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep [note well!] . . . For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise . . . Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Again, an impossible thing to say, if they were *awake* in bliss in heaven.

The second coming of Christ, and the resurrection from the dead at the Last Day, comprise man's *only* hope of life and reward. The EARTH is the destined place in which God's great salvation will be manifested. This is the entire and unique theme of the Scripture message. David, Solomon and Jesus unite to emphasize it -

"Evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth . . . The meek shall inherit the EARTH" (Psalm 37:9-11).

"The righteous shall be recompensed in the EARTH" (Proverbs 11:21).

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the EARTH" (Matthew 5:5).

Surely no statements could be simpler, plainer or more positive! We need to be so careful that our beliefs are based on scripture teaching and not simply on tradition. God's promise to Christ is (when his people shall be fellowheirs with him) -

"I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8).

And Jesus likewise promises to those who obey him -

"To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:26-27).

And therefore they are symbolically shown as singing to him (Revelation 5:10) -

"Thou hast made us kings and priests, and we shall reign on the EARTH."

The Future Age of earth's glory is shown in Revelation 11:15 -

"The kingdoms of THIS WORLD are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever"

- corresponding with what Daniel recorded by Divine inspiration -

"The kingdom and dominion UNDER the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, Whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:27).

The result of Christ's coming the second time is summed up in the angelic announcement at his birth:

"Glory to God in the highest, and ON EARTH peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

Therefore Jesus taught his disciples to pray:

"Thy will be done ON EARTH as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Would he teach them to pray for something that God had no intention of doing? Certainly not! It is absolutely sure and determined. God swore (Numbers 14:21) -

BibleKEY fact:

“ The EARTH is the destined place in which God's great salvation will be manifested. This is the entire and unique theme of the Scripture message. ”

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"AS truly as I live, **all the earth** SHALL be filled with the glory of the Lord!"

How far it is from that today! But *it will come* because God has sworn it. The destiny of the wicked is to be destroyed from God's universe; not forever preserved in writhing torment, as taught by the mainstream denominations of Christendom. David said (Ps. 37:20) "*The wicked shall PERISH.*" And Paul declares (Romans 6:23) that "*The wages of sin is DEATH*" Death - the extinction of all being - is the Divinely determined result of a sinful life: a life not devoted to God -

"*He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption*" (Galatians 6:8).

But we observe that the righteous die as well as the wicked. The answer is that the death that all men die now is not a judicial death: not the *final* death to be dealt to those who are responsible to the judgment of the Last Day. Ordinary death just closes a man's mortal career. For the righteous, it is but a sleep in Christ, awaiting the Day of resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16) -

"*Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him . . . for the Lord shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise.*"

"*Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake* (Daniel 12:2).

There is a "Second Death": final and destructive (Revelation 20:6, 14; 21:8). The unjust are to be brought forth, at Christ's coming, for judgment. And their sentence is that, after the infliction of such punishment as may be merited (many or few stripes: Luke 12:47-48), they shall the second time, by violent and divinely inflicted means, be destroyed by death. As God said through Malachi (4:1)

"*Behold, the Day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the Day that cometh shall burn them up that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

Again we read:

"*They shall be punished with everlasting destruction* (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

- that is, permanent annihilation: they shall be destroyed for ever -

"*As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked NO MORE*" (Proverbs 10:25).

"*The wicked shall be cut off from the earth*" (Proverbs :22).

"*Yet a little while, and the wicked shall NOT BE*" (Psalm 37:10).

"*All the wicked will God DESTROY*" (Psalm 145 :20).

The mixture of pagan doctrines with the teachings of Christ and the apostles in the early centuries resulted in the current Church doctrines of Hell Fire and Eternal Torture as punishment for the wicked. Many verses of Scripture - when translated with the understanding of the meaning of the original words used by God - are thereby clearly understood, and are stripped of their popular teaching, as -

"*Let the wicked be silent in the grave (sheol)*" - Psalm 31:17.

"*I (Jacob) will go down to the grave (sheol) mourning*" (Gen. 37:35).

"*Like sheep are they laid in the grave (sheol)*" -Psa. 49:14.

"*There is no work, knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave (sheol)*" -Ecclesiastes 9:10.

BibleKEY fact:

“ *God swore (Numbers 14:21) - "AS truly as I live, **all the earth** SHALL be filled with the glory of the Lord!"* ”

BibleKEY fact:

“ *the death that all men die now is not a judicial death: not the final death to be dealt to those who are responsible to the judgment of the Last Day* ”

BibleKEY definition:

"responsible" - a term used to describe those who have studied and come to a knowledge of God's plan and purpose, whether or not they are obedient to it through baptism.

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

"The grave (sheol)..darkness..corruption..rest in the dust" (Job 17:13-16).

"GEHENNA" is another New Testament Greek word the translators render "hell." Literally, it means "Valley of Hinnom" (*Gai Hinnom*), referring to a valley outside Jerusalem, into whose continuous fires the rubbish of the city and criminal bodies were thrown. No one was tortured there alive: but all the dead were utterly *destroyed* there. Figuratively, it refers to the fiery divine judgments of the terrible Last Day soon to come on the earth -

"The Lord shall be revealed from heaven . . . in flaming fire taking vengeance on them . . . that obey not . . . who shall be punished with EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION when he shall come" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

"The heaven and earth which are now (the present human constitution) . . . are reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

"The Lord will come with fire . . . for by fire and by sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isaiah 66:15-16).

The latter (Isaiah 66) is at a time when God shall *"extend peace and the glory of the Gentiles"* to Jerusalem; when He will *"make new heavens and new earth"*; when *"all flesh shall come to worship before Him"* (vs. 12, 22, 23).

We are given a preview of this final fiery, purifying judgment upon the earth in the dreadful Gehenna judgment upon Israel in AD 70, when the Israelitish "heaven and earth" were swept away by divine wrath. But this time it will be worldwide, and will be followed by the establishment of universal peace and righteousness under Jesus Christ. He said:

"I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (hades, grave), and of death" (Revelation 1:18).

This shows us that Christ is our reward, and it is he who - *when he returns to the earth* - has power to open the grave, and to bring to life those who have died in him. As the angel said to Daniel (12:2,13)

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt . . . But thou (Daniel), go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

SUMMARY:

- a) Resurrection from the dead awaits all the "responsible" who have died.
- b) Resurrection at the Last Day is the only way to life beyond the grave.
- c) Endless life after resurrection is the reward of all the faithful.
- d) Complete destruction is the end of all who have been disobedient.

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BibleKEY word search:

"HELL" is the frequent AV translation of the Hebrew Sheol and the Greek Hades. The English word "hell" simply means "a covered place: and comes from the Old English "helan": "to cover or conceal." It was used when speaking of putting a roof on a house, or a cover on a book. It is orthodoxy and mythology that has invented its modern ecclesiastical meaning.

"HADES" and "SHEOL" are Greek and Hebrew equivalents, each having the same meaning as the other. In the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament, "hades" was always used as the Greek equivalent for "sheol". It also appears in the same context in NT quotations from the OT (Ac. 2:27; 1 Cr. 15:55). Like "sheol" the translators have rendered it "hell" or "grave" according to their fancy.

BibleKEY word search:

"SHEOL" ("a hollow place?") occurs in the Hebrew Old Testament 65 times, and in AV is rendered "grave" and "hell" 31 times each, and "pit" 3 times. This varied translation is misleading and self-serving, according to the translators' theology.

Both righteous and wicked lie there together (Jacob, Job, Shimei, Joab, "the wicked, etc. - Genesis 37:35; Job 3:17-19; 17-13; 1 Kings 2:6, 9; Psalms 31:17). It is a place of silence, darkness, corruption, forgetfulness, in the dust, no work, no knowledge, no love, no hate, no remembrance (Psalms 31:17; Job 17:13; Eccl.9:10; Psalms 6:5; 88:11-12).

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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. In what way is our reward "reserved in heaven" at the present time?
2. When is the "reserved" reward to be brought to us?
3. How was David, King of Israel, esteemed by God? Did he go to heaven?
4. What class of people are those spoken of in Hebrews 11 by Paul, when he said they had not been made perfect?
5. Where will God's great salvation for the righteous be manifested?
6. What is the destiny of the wicked?
7. What is the root meaning of our English word "Hell"?
8. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word "Sheol"?
9. What is the meaning of the Greek word "Hades"?
10. What is the meaning of the Greek word "Gehenna"?
11. Who has the keys to unlock the grave? When will he do so?
12. What is the meaning of the term "responsible" as used in this lesson?
13. What will happen to all the "responsible" who have died?
14. What is the reward for all who have been faithful and obedient to God?
15. What is the destiny of all who have been disobedient to God's will?