

Sermon Mark S. Aites
A Study Of Death

TEXT: HEB. 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

INTRODUCTION:

1. The subject of death is often misunderstood.
 - 1) Some believe that one is "dead all over like Rover"; that there is no consciousness after death.
 - 2) Others, that when one dies they go directly to heaven.
2. It is the latter of these that we want to look at and consider.
 - 1) People believe the majority go to heaven upon death.
 - 2) Illustrate: in the old western movies, the bad guy gets shot, and goes to the "big round up in the sky."
- 3) It is contrary to what Jesus said in **Matt 7:13-14**: *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*
7:14 *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

DISCUSSION:

I. THE DEFINITION.

- A. The word death lit. means, "a separation."
- B. We are made in the image of God (**Gen. 1:26-27**), and as such we are unique, in that we have a body and a spirit.
 1. The Lord *formeth the spirit of man within him* (**Zech. 12:1**).
 2. **James 2:26** *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*
- C. With death, there is a separation that takes place, as the spirit departs from the body.
 1. **Eccl. 12:7** *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*
 2. Just as the Lord formed the spirit of man within him, upon death, it returns to God's care.
- D. The inevitable question is, where does the spirit go upon death?

II. THE DESTINATION.

- A. In **Luke 16:19-31**, Jesus tells a story of two men, the rich man and Lazarus.
 1. In life, one was a beggar; he desired to eat crumbs from the rich man's table; the dogs even licking his sores.
 2. The other fared sumptuously or luxuriously. He wore purple (the color of royalty); as he had the best in life.
- B. Upon death, their spirits separated from their bodies.
 1. **Luke 16:22-23** *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*
16:23 *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*
 2. Notice their destinations: one, Abraham's bosom, the other, torment.
- C. It should be noted, that the word "hell" is not a good translation.

1. A better translation is *Hades* --which is the place of departed spirits; also known, as the unseen realm of the dead.
 2. The word *hell* or *gehenna* (from the Greek), is not used in this text.
- D. Neither Lazarus, nor the rich man, found themselves in heaven.
1. The rich man was conscious of his new environment, and found it very unsuitable.
Luke 16:24 *And 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.*
 2. He also was able to see and converse with Abraham, who had long since been dead.
 3. What is described, is two compartments: one of comfort, and one of torment; but one cannot travel from one to the other.
Luke 16:26 *And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*
- E. Hades, the place of departed spirits, is described here as having two compartments or places. The first of which is known as "paradise."
1. This word does not appear here, but we know it is the same place from other texts. Here it is called, "Abraham's bosom".
 2. In **Luke 23:43**, Jesus told the thief, *... Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*
 3. The word *paradise*, from a Persian word which meant, "a place of pleasure, or pleasure garden."
 4. We know that it does not refer to heaven because of Peter's statements in **Acts 2** concerning Jesus.
 - 1) David's prophecy of Christ.
Acts 2:31 *He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell (hades), neither his flesh did see corruption.*
 - 2) Christ's soul was not left in the Hadean realm; he wasn't even there long enough for the flesh of His body to decay from his death on the cross.
 5. When Jesus died on the cross, His departed Spirit, along with that of the thief's, as per His promise, went to Hades, or "Paradise."
- F. In contrast, when the rich man became conscious of his new environment, it was *torment* ("tartarus").
1. It is a word which appears in **2 Pet. 2:4**, and **Jude 6**.
 2. *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartarus), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Pet 2:4; cf. Jude 6).*
 3. Note that even the angels that sinned are kept in this place of torment until the Judgment.

III. THE DESIGNATION.

- A. Since Hades is a present reality, then we must recognize that heaven and hell are designated as future realities.
1. Often in funerals, people are preached into heaven, and they have not yet gone through the Judgment!

2 Cor. 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

2. Remember our text: **Heb. 9:27**.
 3. You cannot have departed souls in heaven or hell prior to the Judgment!
- B. Notice Jesus' statement in **Matt. 25:41** *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*
1. Jesus was speaking about the Judgment; and even at the Judgment, He speaks of hell as being prepared for (future tense) the devil and his angels.
 2. Heaven and hell then are future realities, but Hades is that which applies to the present.

CONCLUSION:

1. I once heard the point made; "you will know where you are destined for eternity 5 minutes after you die."
2. Are you ready?