

What Comes After Death? (Part 1)



Victory Over Death (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious truths of Scripture that God has revealed to me through many years of study and ministry.

I'm continuing today with the theme, "Victory Over Death." Yesterday I showed you how the resurrection of Jesus is clearly predicted in the prophecies of the Old Testament and how our resurrection will follow as a result of His.

Today I'm going to draw aside just a corner of the veil that separates this world from the next and I'm going to give you a glimpse of what comes after death.

Today, I'll be speaking about the period before Jesus came. We need to understand that the death and the resurrection of Jesus was cosmic in its effects. It produced results that affected the entire universe. In particular, it produced profound and permanent changes in the unseen world and in the destiny that awaits the souls of righteous believers after they depart this life.

The best way to understand man's ongoing destiny, and his destiny after death, is to look at the method of man's creation as it's described for us in Genesis 2:7:

> "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [or living soul]." (NAS)

We notice that for total human personality there are two distinct sources: The material part of man, his body, has its source in the earth; it comes from below. But the non-material part of man, his soul, has its source in God, and comes from above. So, man is a union of constituents from two different sources: Physical, from the earth below; spiritual from God above. We have to bear this in mind as we study man's ongoing destiny.

At death these two different constituent parts of man are again separated. The body returns to the earth from which it came and decays. The soul passes into the unseen world. There are two words in the Bible for this unseen world. In Hebrew it's called Sheol, and in the Greek of the New

Testament it's called Hades.

Now we'll look at a picture from the Old Testament of souls in Sheol. This picture is taken from Isaiah 14:9 & 10. It is a prediction of God's judgment on the King of Babylon, and it describes how the soul of the King of Babylon descends into Sheol, and how that soul is recognized there, and in a sense, rated by other departed kings and persons who've died previously. This is what Isaiah says:

> "Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. They will all respond and say to you, 'Even you have been made weak as we, You have become like us.'" (NAS)

I have already explained that Sheol is the place to which departed souls go after the separation from the physical body. Sheol is not the ultimate destiny of departed souls, it is a place of temporary imprisonment awaiting final resurrection and judgment. But we'll see that later in my series of talks. Turning now again to this description in Isaiah 14:9 & 10, the descent of the soul of the King of Babylon into Sheol, we note some very important points.

First of all, there is no indication that those departed souls have any ongoing knowledge of current events on earth.

Secondly, however, there is definite indication that they have a recollection of their previous condition on earth.

Thirdly, there is a definite persistence of personality.

Fourth, there is a recognition of one person by another.

Fifth, there is communication between one person and another.

Sixth, there is an awareness of present conditions in Sheol, and

Seventh, there is correspondence between the state of the departed souls as it was on earth, and its state in Sheol. That is to say, those who are kings on earth are still recognized as kings in Sheol.

Now, in Ezekiel 32:18-32, there is a similar but much longer picture of God's judgment on Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and on many other Gentile kings and their armies who had been slain in battle. This passage is too long for us to look to right now but it reproduces essentially all the features that we've found in Isaiah 14:9 & 10.

I will just briefly recapitulate those features because they are of great importance. I mentioned seven features.

First of all, there was no indication that those departed souls had any knowledge of continuing events on earth.

Secondly, however they did have a recollection of previous conditions on earth.

Thirdly, there was a definite persistence of personality.

Fourth, there was a recognition of one person by another.

Fifth, there was communication between one person and another.

Sixth, there was an awareness of the present conditions in Sheol, and

Seventh, there was some kind of correspondence between the state of departed souls, as they were on this earth and their state in Sheol, in the sense that kings on earth were still recognized as kings.

In the New Testament we have a picture given by Jesus Himself, of what happens to souls that depart this life.

This is the story of Lazarus, the beggar, and the rich man outside whose gate he was laid, desiring to be fed with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. We'll start at the point in the story where both died. This is Luke 16:22-26:

> "Now it came about that the poor man died [that's Lazarus] and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he [that's the rich man] lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of this finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able,

> and that none may cross over from there to us.”” (NAS)

Now remember that these are the words of Jesus Himself, the most reliable of all authorities, and remember also that it is nowhere stated that this is a parable; it is a record of actual events that took place in the period before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus’ account repeats many features from the Old Testament.

First of all, we notice that the body returns to the earth, but the soul passes out into the unseen world - in the new Testament called Hades. In this unseen world there are the following features, all of which are carried over from the account in the Old Testament. First of all, there is a recollection of previous conditions on earth. It’s rather interesting that Abraham actually said to the rich man, “Remember that during your life you received good things,” so clearly, there is remembrance of previous conditions on earth.

Secondly, there is a persistence of personality. Lazarus was still Lazarus, Abraham was still Abraham, the rich man was still the rich man, though no longer rich. Then again, there was a recognition of one person by another. The rich man recognized both Abraham and Lazarus. Also, there was a consciousness of present conditions, particularly the rich man was very conscious of the agony of the torment that he found himself in. However, there is one important extra feature that’s added in this account by Jesus, and the feature is that there is a complete separation between the righteous and the unrighteous. Though both are in this place reserved for the souls of the departed, they are in complete different sections of that place, and there is a great difference between what’s happening to them. The wicked rich man is in torment, he’s being tormented in flame, but the righteous man, the poor man, is in rest. The place of rest that he’s in is described as Abraham’s bosom. The mention of Abraham particularly indicates that it’s for those who follow in the steps of Abraham’s faith.

One other important feature brought up by this account of Jesus, it is that God’s angels took charge of the soul of Lazarus. Angels carried him to his place of rest. We find also that this is duplicated in the experience of the wicked. Angels, Satan’s angels, take charge of the souls of the wicked. In Revelation 6:8, John the Revelator says:

> “I looked, and there before me was a pale horse: Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.” (NIV)

We see there that both Death and Hades are persons. They are, in fact, Satanic angels. It’s usually taught that Death has power over men’s bodies, Hades has power over men’s souls. Death causes men to die; Hades, who follows behind him, takes charge of the souls of the wicked departed and carries them away into the place of torment and imprisonment that is appointed for them. So, we see in these passages, both from Old and from New Testament, a picture that’s always consistent and has many vivid details of the destiny of departed souls; that is, in the period before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Our time is up for today but I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time.

Tomorrow I’ll explain the change that took place in the unseen world as the result of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the different destiny that now waits the departing souls of the righteous.

Radio Program

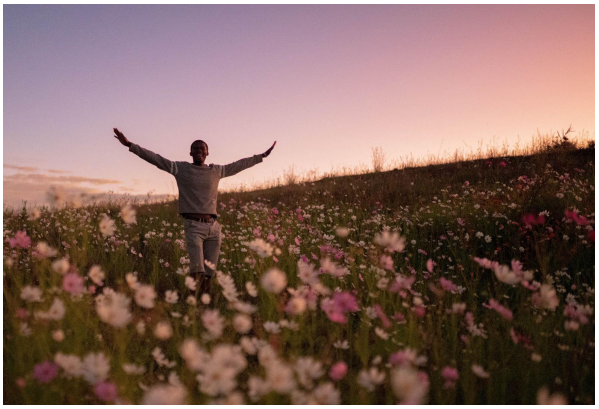
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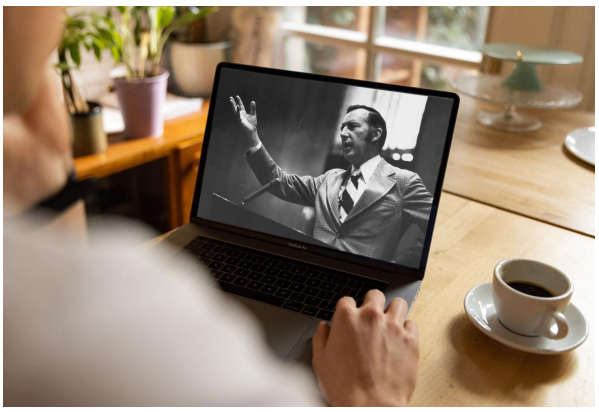
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