

What About Death And Hell?

Part III



By Philip E. Busby

Question #19 - *"I have been studying the Bible recently regarding death. A lot of questions arose due to me losing my son last year. One particular one is the idea of "heaven" and "hell". What is Hades, Sheol...etc. and I don't believe that my son is in heaven - I believe he is asleep. What does the Bible say about hell? Is it different from the lake of fire? Was it meant for Satan and his angels? What have you learned in studying God's word?"*

So, if our bodies are hopelessly lost, what survives? The answer is that we are made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-28) God consists of three parts. Some Christians like to say God is three individual parts or personalities, but that would be the belief in three gods. God is three parts! Without all three there is not a whole. This is the problem man will face when we lose our flesh. The three parts of God are called The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost. This is yet another example of the Bible using terminology which is simply the best way for us to begin understanding. The Father is termed this way to denote the part of God which makes the ultimate decisions. Just like a family, there are desires and they may at times be in conflict with each other. However, it's up to the father to make the ultimate choice as to which way to go. (I Cor. 11:1-12) The other two parts: The Son and The Holy Ghost, thus, send information and desires to The Father. This is why one of those parts is called The

Son. This term was given to the part of God which was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. (John 1:14) We saw firsthand a relationship which most closely mirrored a father and son. The Holy Ghost is the part we understand the least. Because we focus so much on our flesh, our spirit is something we do not understand well. Therefore, we do not understand the part of God which is called The Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost! However, this part is just as real as the other two parts, and is the counterbalance to The Son. Jesus displayed to us how a balanced existence works. The Father needs to make the choices as The Son and The Holy Ghost do the work yielded to The Father's will.

We are these three parts as well: body, mind, and spirit. The body was made from the dust of this earth. The mind and spirit were instilled by God breathing into Adam's nostrils. (Gen 2:7) Again, the body is the part we understand best because we focus on pleasing it most. Where is the choice to please it made? The mind! The mind is not the gray matter in our skull. That is only the physical connection our body has to the mind. The mind is that part of us where choices about who we will be are made on a regular basis. Our spirit is the counterbalance, or should be our counterbalance, to the body. There is no direct link between the body and the spirit. The link between these two parts are made through the mind. This means we can work as a whole being by allowing both the body and spirit to send input to the mind so it can make a balanced decision, or we can be lopsided and conflicted by ignoring the spirit part. It's our choice.

When our mind allows us to only care for the pleasures and desires of the flesh, the spirit is neglected, and its work obscured. This is most often what happens. This is yet another reason the flesh must die. Its selfish desires, more times than not, keep us from being balanced. (Rom. 7:20-24) This is the real reason there is war, hunger, sickness, disease, and suffering. In catering to the desires of the flesh, we have formed a world where even the flesh suffers. This shows us the damage sin brings. God created us to live in a balanced way, not a lopsided way; and when we stray from God's truth, we find we do not gain but lose. In life, we live in a lopsided way because we cater to the flesh, then we lose this flesh to death and cease to even have the ability to be balanced because we are literally without a part of our being!

Jesus came not so our selfish flesh could live but so we could afford to die and be free from it! This is why Jesus said He came so that we might have life

and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10) Once dead, we will not have a flesh, and we will not be able to return to our old flesh. However, Jesus came to provide a way for us to have a new body which can make us whole once again. Not only did the work of The Messiah give us a new body but one which cannot be corrupted by sin. (I Cor. 15:52) Jesus also left this planet to go and prepare a new universe for us to be placed in. (John 14:1-3) This place will only be for those who have chosen with their minds to be whole and balanced in the way God intended us to be, which can only be truly accomplished through faith. If we live these lives showing, through our free will, that we only care about the flesh, then we, by our desires, have shown we do not truly desire the new body and place God has prepared. It's really that simple!

So what you are seeing in the theology of Greek mythology is this life - not the afterlife. Here, not under the world but on this world, we stand as whole beings, both the good and the bad. We are walking through time. We are individuals and death does not change that fact. Death only takes from us one part. The part which connects us to this world. Once in that state, the Bible clearly tells us there is a place prepared for those who desire God and another place prepared for those who do not desire God. However, it also makes clear we will not go to either of those places until we have all stood before God for judgment!

What are these places? The place for those who desire God is a place of new beginning. It will not have all the same exact physical laws as this universe, but it will be the same in many ways. We will be made whole, once again, by being given a new body which will not grow old or die, but it will be a body. Jesus showed that to us by walking, talking, and even eating after His resurrection from the dead. (Luke 24:36-45, John 21:1-15) His promise to us, before He left this planet, was He would prepare this place so that where He is, there we may be also. This place consists of a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. (Rev. 21) This is to say, a new universe with all the same potential and more than what we started out with here! This place is often referred to with the generic word, "heaven."

The other place is not a place where the devil will rule and reign. Again, that is what the Bible tells us about the here and now. (Eph. 6:11-12, Rev. 12:7-17) The place for those who have rejected God is not here

on, in, or below this planet or universe. It's simply called The Lake of Fire, (Rev. 20:10) and yes, this place was originally prepared for the devil and those angels who followed him in a rebellion against God. It was never God's intent, nor His will that any of us perish in this place! However, man has made his choice. So, this place is described to us using terms which denote physical suffering: a fire which is never quenched and a worm that never dies. Both of these things have to do with man's understanding of the grave, but just as the righteous will be born again, the wicked will suffer eternal death. Fire is a consuming force which can quickly return physical forms back into dust. Many cultures around the world have and still do cremate bodies after death in order to speed up the inevitable process. The worm is a symbol of another way for the body to return to dust. It is a much slower way, but a way nonetheless. As we have covered more than once already, our physical form stays on this planet and is consumed by the worm here. So, when the Bible describes for us a place which burns with eternal fire and has an eternal worm, it's not talking about the destruction of our physical form but of those parts which are not of this world: those parts which a physical fire and a physical worm could not touch!

This is why Jesus told us in Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." If your life is important to you, then understand that the life flowing through your body is already doomed. It may be today or it may be many years from now, but your body will die. Attempting to save it is foolish. (Mark 8:35) The wise man builds his life on the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, but the foolish man builds his life on the doomed sand of this flesh. (Matt. 7:21-29) Now, one may ask why does the Bible talk in eternal terms when referring to the fire and worm? The answer is that God wants there to be no mistake about the fact you are not coming back. The end is the end!

Again, we will only end up in one of these two places after the Judgment day. Revelation describes for us a time and place when all humans who have ever lived will stand before God. They will be judged by the things written in the books, which are a record of those choices and actions we make and take in this life. All will be found short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23) but there will be another book there called The Lamb's Book of Life. This book will contain all the names of

those who have chosen, through not just their words but their desires and actions, to seek the life God created us to have. Though these people have not lived perfect lives, their desire to have a relationship with God (faith) will be counted in place of their lack of righteousness, (James 2:14-26) and they will be welcomed into that place Jesus went to prepare. Jesus prepared it because without this world there is only one other place you can go and that is the place prepared for the devil and those who followed him. All those not found in The Lamb's Book of Life will have to be removed to that place called the Lake of Fire.

So, the choice is clear. Do we want to continue in God or do we want to walk away? Jesus prepared a place that where He is we may be also, and the Lake of Fire is a place where God's presence is not. Because God is omnipresent, only God could create a place where He is not, and the true misery of hell will be total separation from the God who created you. This is an aspect of hell we simply cannot comprehend. No matter how much you desire not to have God in your life, while you live in this world, you are still living in His presence to some degree. If you choose not to take the opportunity to reach out to Him, you will end up in a place where you will never feel Him again!

Into the Lake of Fire we are told will go everything which is not for God, (Luke 11:23, Rev. 19-21, I Jn. 2:15-17) and it is referred to as the second death. Why are we told death and hell will be thrown in? For the same reason we are told death and hell will deliver up the dead! God knows men have many false philosophies about death. God also knows some people will not listen to His Word and will live this life simply believing that being a "good person" will get them to some form of heaven. God wanted to make it clear that no matter what you believed in, only the truth will keep you from the Lake of Fire; and that brings us to the core issue of your question, which is, what happens to us between the death of our physical forms and the Day of Judgment?

Much of what we need to know we have already covered, but again, let's look at the popular philosophies. One is that there is a place, usually a dark place or miserable place, where all the dead go. The other is that there is a place where the good and bad are separated. Both these theologies can have attached to them the idea of awaiting judgment of some kind or actually being the eternal place of "the dead." Now, of

course, the idea that people go to the place they will spend eternity is wrong. As we just talked about, all will stand before God for judgment before that will happen. However, there is one more false philosophy connected to the idea of waiting which we must cover. Believing people die and go directly to a hell which is a waiting place before the resurrection or an eternal destination of some kind, gives rise to the idea that those who are alive can pray for those in hell and give them a chance at heaven or the like. This goes against the Bible which teaches us, the work of The Messiah is the only thing which can help the dead. Only His work can free us from the second death, no matter how good or bad we have been. This means only you, in your lifetime, can either choose to be in or out of the plan of God. There is nothing in between, and there is only one man, Jesus Christ, who has the power to save your soul. Prayers for the dead are useless. This world is where we await death and the judgment of God in a one foot in front of the other way. So, if you are going to pray for someone, do it while they are alive, because only in life and among the living can we effect change. Many do not want to believe this because it puts things out of their control, but remember, taking things out of our control is truly part of what the judgment of death is all about.

Now, aside from the ideas that say there is a place where the dead are gathered to wait, another popular theology is what is often referred to as grave sleeping. This is the idea that people who die simply have no consciousness until the resurrection. Unlike the ideas of an underworld, many people who believe in grave sleeping simply believe everything you consist of is in the grave, or some unknowable spiritual realm. I guess there is no end to exactly where people may think the spirit sleeps, but the idea that a person sleeps really only differs from the ideas of going to a hell of some sort in one major way. The basic choice is really only between consciousness or unconsciousness. This is why so many Christians believe in grave sleeping. They may have come to a point where they understand heaven and hell is not until after the Judgment, but they still don't know what to do with the time in-between. So, it makes sense to many Christians to say people are asleep, which is simply to say they are not conscious of the passage of time or the place they spend that time in.

What people believe is often guided by what makes them feel best. What should make us feel best is the fact that we know this issue is simply in the hands

of God, and beyond that it should not matter a great deal. Again, all will stand before God and the sheep will be separated from the goats based on this life's actions. However, what bothers most people is the question of whether the dead are in pain or not, in what they see as the interval. For this, we must go back to the fact the dead do not have bodies to be in pain, so the only pain they could be in is emotional pain! The Bible does not want us to misunderstand that death without God is death indeed; so as we have talked about, the Bible does use physical imagery of distress and pain to describe hell; but if there is a true hell, it is the Lake of Fire! What the Bible wants us to grasp is the fact that death brings a need, a need to be a whole person again, and only God can supply that need. This means being separated from God is the only true misery, and even for those who do not serve God, that will not happen until God tells them to "depart" on the Day of Judgment. (Matt. 7:22-23) Meaning God and His saving plan is definitely something you do not want to leave this world without!

This means the question is not one of pain or no pain in between, only conscious or unconscious of the passage of time after death. So, which one is it? The answer is both! The best way to describe death is to say we leave this world and go unto God! This means we will be conscious of the next events to befall us, but we will not be conscious of time in-between. Am I talking about grave sleeping? No. I'm talking about the same simple dynamics of not having this physical body. What connects us to this time line is our ability to put one foot in front of another. To interact with the physical world. Once we lose our physical form we lose that ability! We are liberated from the time line and there is no reason for us to pass through it! To understand this, think about the time line as if it were a maze, not in the aspect you could get stuck in it, but in the aspect that there is a beginning and an end with many turns and choices in-between. Once we die, we leave the maze. There is no longer a need nor is there an ability to follow the turns and jogs of the maze. After being removed from the maze, there is no reason we can not simply skip over time. Meaning there is no need to be conscious or unconscious of the passage of time the living are still going through, while our spirit and mind wait in the grave or some other place. There is only the need to be at the next event which has relevance to our individual existence!

This is a hard concept for most people, and

unfortunately, instead of allowing The Holy Ghost to bring us to a place where we do grasp it, most people automatically interpret the Bible's words to fit what they feel they can understand. When there is reference to the grave, people do not simply think of that part of the person which is still with us by virtue of being in the ground, or part of the ground, they tend to think in terms of our whole self. People do the same when they hear terms like Paul uses in I Corinthians 15:15-23. There Paul talks about those who have fallen asleep. Paul is only talking about the fact their physical form will no longer function, not that their spirit and mind have lost consciousness.

What causes us to get so tripped up is the fact we just can't get it out of our mind that the body is left behind! We do not stay with our body in the grave. We do not go to an underworld where the preservation of our bodies are crucial to our continued existence or where we await a reconnecting of some kind with our bodies. God does not need, nor does He desire to use our flesh to resurrect us! This is why people like Lazarus, which were raised from the dead, are not with us today, but died again later on. We must shed this flesh completely. When the Bible talks about things which relate to the grave being opened or our being set free from the grave, it's not trying to shore up our belief in things like grave sleeping; it's trying to make it clear to us just the opposite. It's trying to assure us that unlike pagan thought, the grave is not something which can or does, in any way, hold us back from going directly to the presence of God!

When we die, our mind and spirit leave the body and never come back! Death is the freedom to return to God and that is exactly what all humans do upon death. Now with the exception of those such as Lazarus, which were for the sake of glorifying God called back to their earthly form, which were simply repaired in the same way any healing works, there are two events which we can be taken to upon death. They are the first resurrection or the second resurrection. Which one will we be a part of? That depends on faith or lack thereof. The first resurrection will take place at the return of Christ to this earth. The scriptures which describe this event gives us a glimpse into what I'm talking about when I say we go directly there. Paul says in I Thessalonians 4, that the dead in Christ shall rise "first," then we which are alive and remain shall be "caught up" to meet The Lord in the air. Those who have walked this earth believing and trusting in God

but have died before the second coming of Christ have passed over our time line to be joined in that moment. When a believer dies, they leave the rest of us behind to keep walking in the time sequence. If we die before Christ's return, we will do the same; but if we are still walking in the time sequence right up to the moment when Christ splits the eastern sky, we will not stay in these mortal bodies. We will be change in that moment in the twinkling of an eye. For it does not matter whether we have already shed this flesh or not we must put on incorruptibility! (I Cor. 15:52-57)

If it helps, we should look at it this way, the dead are already on their way, if we live until that moment we will catch up! Now, because of other false teachings in the church, it's also necessary to deal with one more false belief here. Many churches falsely teach that Christ will sneak back and take the believers away from the earth while leaving the rest of the human race to suffer a "tribulation." They call this "The Rapture." This theory is based on that pagan idea that the dead are somehow trapped in the grave or in Hades of some sort. They believe Christ needs to come back in order to rescue those who are dead and transport those who are alive so they can be taken with Him to - and here it comes - yet another unknown place to wait for what I can only guess should be termed Christ's third coming to this earth some seven years later. Now that's a mess!

Again, we have to cast off the thoughts of men. There is not a second coming of Christ followed by a third. There is only a second! This world is already facing great tribulation, and just as in the flood of Noah's day, God's Spirit will not always strive with men. (Gen. 6:3, I Jn. 2:17) Remember what we talked about earlier, about people always asking how God can allow war, sickness, etc.? Well, He will not allow forever. This world does not need a specific seven years or so time of punishment inflicted by God Himself. The Spirit of God is already here. It's the promise we saw fulfilled in Acts chapter 2. He is not here to punish us. He is here to lead us into all truth; (John 16:13) and the truth is, we create enough misery all on our own. The Spirit of God does not create it, He allows it, and He will continue to allow it until He is taken out of the way. (II Thes. 2:5-10) When will He be taken out of the way? When The Messiah once again returns to gather all those who have believed on Him unto Himself, and to rule and reign, the first thousand years of which will be distinguished by the fact the devil will be locked away in the bottomless pit!

This lines up exactly with what Jesus said about the coming of The Holy Ghost. In John 16:7 Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." So too, The Holy Ghost, Who is here with us now, must return unto The Father for Jesus to return to us. The resurrection of the believers is not so they can be taken out before God pours out His wrath! God's wrath is His allowance in the here and now. God's love and grace is to return to this earth, put a stop to our destruction, and show us the true way to live in peace! All those who have put their faith in God will be resurrected and gathered to create and share in that time. This is why God said, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Revelation 20:6 Those of the first resurrection will have their incorruptible bodies, and with them, they will once again walk this world. They will effect change and through their actions show the righteousness of God in a way they never could have in their corruptible forms, because sin will not be able to tarnish or harm them as it did before. This is what is meant when the Bible talks about Jesus being the first born among many brethren. (Rom. 8:29) He was the first to walk in perfection showing forth the righteousness of God. Others who have truly desired to walk in His footsteps will someday get to do just that! (I Cor. 15:19-25)

This is what Jesus told the man dying on the cross next to Him who rebuked the man on the other side of Jesus. After rebuking the man who mocked Jesus, this man ask Jesus to remember him when "...thou comest into thy kingdom." Jesus told the man, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43 Jesus was not describing some mystical spiritual place. Jesus was granting the man's request. The book of Revelation records in chapter 11 verse 15 that "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." In Acts chapter 2 we are told The Father tells Jesus to set on His right hand until He makes His foes His footstool. Jesus Himself started His ministry by proclaiming the Kingdom of God is at hand. (Matt. 4:17) All this is reference to the fact Christ came to rule this world. The world would take His life the first time; but the second time, He is coming in great power which the armies of this world will not overcome. (Rev. 19:11-21) When He comes, the lion

will lay down with the lamb and peace will reign. (Isa. 11:1-12) After suffering the agony of dying on the cross, the next thing the man hanging beside Jesus would know is returning with Jesus that second time to establish a world of peace like no man since Adam has known. According to Jesus that was not just this man's tomorrow, it was his today! (Col. 3:1-4)

Now, the second place we can be taken to upon death is the second resurrection which John described in Revelation. We have already talked about this because the second resurrection is the gathering to the Day of Judgment. Those who are a part of the first resurrection will be at the Day of Judgment as well, but they will already know their names are written in that Lamb's Book of Life. This is another reason they are blessed! For the Day of Judgment will be the second resurrection, which will bring to God all those who were not part of the first. Here is another place we see more clearly the truth that we go directly. In Revelation 20:13 we are told the sea as well as death and hell deliver up the dead that was in them. This statement is another place God is trying to tell us something through physical illustration, for the sea certainly is not a holding place for the dead. God is telling us, all will be gathered, not just from wherever we died but whenever we died. This scripture also tells us what we touched on before; the fact death, hell, and the grave are all thrown in the Lake of Fire. Be assured there are only two places to end up. They are the place Jesus went to prepare for those written in The Lamb's Book of Life, and the Lake of Fire. It does not matter what religion you follow or what god you believe in. You do not go to a sea god if you die in the sea or some other false god whom you believe rules the place where you are. Make no mistake about it, from all times and all places, all humans will be gathered. From Adam and Eve to the last child conceived, all will stand before The One True God! If you have not put your trust in The God Who created us all, you will be forever separated from Him in a place of utter destruction!

As I stated at the beginning of this answer, your question covers an immense amount of ground, but we would attempt to break it down a bit. Even in the attempt to do that, it's a lot of information. So, let me try to sum it all up. Heaven is that place Jesus went to prepare. Hell is the Lake of Fire created for the devil and those who followed him. Only at the Day of Judgment will any humans be placed in either place! In true Biblical terms, there is no waiting area for the dead

because once we are separated from our flesh there is no need to be a part of the time line any longer. In fact, death is about not being part of the time line. So, as we walk this time line we all await a resurrection. This is true no matter who you are and no matter what you do. If we die in Christ, we go to that first resurrection, and if we are alive when it happens we will be a part of it. Those who have not believed in God before the second coming of Christ and all those who live and die after the second coming will be a part of the second resurrection!

Now, in answering this question I have attempted to lay out the facts. This means I have not taken the time to cover each scripture verse or story which in some way talks about or eludes to our subject. In point of fact, such a thing could only be done with a verse by verse study of Genesis through Revelation. However, there are those scriptures which stand out in people's minds which some may not see as completely lining up with what I've said. I do not deny, especially until you can really let go of wrong thinking and grasp the truth, this is likely the case. However, what I hope you will see is that my breakdown of the subject is not based on a scripture verse here and there like so many other philosophies masquerading as "Christian," but it is something that puts the scriptures together as you read through the entire Word of God, and causes them to make perfect sense in ways they never have before! Thus in closing, I once again pray you will learn to continually trust in The Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding!

If you would like to submit a question of your own or if you have questions/comments about this Q&A, you can visit us online at www.livingspringsinstitute.org and click on Q&A or write us at:
Living Springs Institute
P.O. Box 271
Loveland, CO 80539

We'd also like to remind you, subscriptions to our bimonthly publication *Shaqah* are - FREE - as well as our book *A Sabbath By Design*, and other materials are available now - just visit us online, write or call. (970) 593-9468

We would love to hear from you! Feel free to contact us with any comments you may have about our publications or website.