

YOUTH BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Lesson 18: Where Are the Dead?

We have studied how sin entered the world (lesson #4), and how it brought sickness and death. You will remember that Satan lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he said “Ye shall not surely die.” Genesis 3:4. We know for sure that Adam and Eve are both dead today.

As we look around us, it seems that everyone would recognize this promise as being a lie, but to this very day, Satan is still trying to make people believe that when they die, they don’t really die. He tells them that dying does not really mean they die, but that they go on living in a different form than we live in this life. But is this really what is meant by death?

1. From what material was man made in the beginning? Genesis 2:7.
The _____ of the ground.

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

2. What did God then do to make him a living soul? Genesis 2:7.
_____ into his nostrils the breath of _____.

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

Note: It was not a living soul that God put in man, but the breath of life. When you put breath from God into a body, you then have a living soul. We could write this like a mathematical equation: Breath + Body = Living Soul.

3. What happens to the soul that sins? Ezekiel 18:20. It shall _____.

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”

4. To what did Job compare the spirit from God that is in man? Job 27:3. My _____ is in me.

“All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils.”

5. When a man dies, what happens to his spirit? Ecclesiastes 12:7. It returns to _____.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Note: This verse shows us that the spirit of life—the breath that God put into man—goes back to God at the time of death. It was God’s to begin with, and

when a man dies, it returns to Him. At that time, the dust, which in the beginning was made a "living soul," goes back as it was, to the earth.

6. What becomes of a person's thoughts when he dies? Psalm 146:3, 4. His thoughts _____.

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

7. Do the dead know anything at all? Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10. They know not _____.

"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

The Dead Are Not Yet Raised

8. Where do the dead sleep? Daniel 12:2. In the _____ of the _____.

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

9. How long do they sleep there? Job 14:12. Till the _____ be no more.

"So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Note: 2 Peter 3:3, 4, 10 tells us that it is at the coming of Jesus that the heavens will be no more. That is not 'heaven', God's throne, but 'heavens' our sky and atmosphere.

10. Where do the dead rest until the resurrection? John 5:28, 29. In the _____.

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Note: It is very important to remember that Jesus said that the dead are in their graves, and that they will remain there until they hear the voice of God at the resurrection.

11. Is it possible for the dead to praise the Lord? Psalm 115:17. They praise _____ the Lord.

"The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence."

12. Why cannot the dead praise the Lord? Psalm 6:5. They have no _____.

“For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?”

13. Long after David's death, what did Peter say about him? Acts 2:29, 34. He is not ascended into the _____.

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand.”

Note: The Bible speaks of David as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), yet even David is not in heaven; he is still in his grave.

Are the Dead Conscious?

14. How did Jesus refer to Lazarus death? John 11:11-14. Awake him out of _____.

“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, 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: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

Note: If people really go to heaven when they die, for Jesus to have called Lazarus back to life would have been a very cruel thing to do to him.

15. When the daughter of Jairus died, what did Jesus say she was doing? Luke 8:52. She but _____.

“And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.”

Note: When you are sound asleep, you are not aware of anything that is going on. Time goes by, but you are not aware of it. When you awaken in the morning, it is as if only a moment passed. The big difference between sleep and death is that only Jesus can awaken us from the sleep of death.

The Bible teaching that the dead are not conscious is a most reasonable one. Suppose you were knocked unconscious by a speeding automobile. As you lie on the street, completely unconscious, how much do you know? You answer, “Nothing.” But, suppose that while you are laying there unconscious, a truck runs over you and kills you. What would you be thinking about now, and how much would you know? Some say, “After you are dead, you would know everything, but while your were unconscious, you knew nothing. But the Bible says, “In that very day his thoughts perish” and “the dead know not anything.” The dead are in their

graves, resting in unconscious sleep. None of the dead are now in heaven, or suffering in hell.

16. Who only has immortality (never dies)? Timothy 6:15, 16. Only _____.

“Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

17. Is it possible for us to receive immortality? 1 Corinthians 15:52, 53. Yes, we shall be _____.

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

18. How do we receive this life? Romans 6:23. It is the gift of _____.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

19. To whom is this gift of life given? Matthew 19:17. Those who _____ the commandments.

“And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Note: It was because man sinned that death came to all men. How foolish to believe that we may again have life while we are still disobeying God.

A Difficult Text Explained

“And Jesus said unto him Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Luke 23:43

Some people ask, “Didn’t Jesus promise the thief on the cross that he would go to heaven with Him that very day?” Well, let’s see if Jesus went to heaven that very day?

20. The morning of the resurrection, where did Jesus tell Mary He had not yet been? John 20:17. I am not _____ ascended.

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

Note: When Jesus died, He did not go immediately to be in heaven, but He lay in the grave (see Matthew 28:6), awaiting the resurrection.

The whole meaning of Jesus' promise to the thief depends on the punctuation of the sentence. If I were to say: "My son says the teacher is no good," I mean that my son says he has a teacher who is not good. If, on the other hand, I say, "My son, says the teacher, is no good," I mean something quite different. In this sentence, by just putting two commas in, I have told you that, according to the teacher, my son is no good.

You see, in the promise Jesus made to the thief, the comma makes all the difference. In the original language in which our Bibles were written, there were none of the punctuation marks that our English language has in it. These punctuation marks were put there by men who translated the Bible into our language, not by the inspired Bible writers.

If you place the comma in front of the word today, it means that Jesus promised the thief he would go to Paradise that very day. This would contradict what Jesus later said to Mary. If, on the other hand, you place the comma after the word today, it means that that very day, while He was dying on the cross, Jesus made the promise to the thief that, at the resurrection, He would take the poor repentant thief to be in heaven with Him. Notice how nicely this goes along with all the other texts we have been reading.

Others will say, according to Luke 16, did not Jesus teach that the people go directly to heaven or hell at death? No, while it is true that some of the Jews taught that idea, Jesus did not. No one believes that when a person dies his body is taken to heaven or hell, for everyone knows that the body remains in the grave after burial. Yet this parable speaks of the various parts of the body—the finger, tongue, and eyes. Jesus was simply using a Jewish idea of death to teach a great moral lesson.

The lesson Jesus was trying to teach is very clear from the remarks He made at the beginning of the story. The Pharisees were covetous. They also regarded wealth as an evidence of God's favor and poverty as evidence of his displeasure.

The lessons Jesus was trying to teach were these.

1. This life is the time when we make our decision for salvation. There will be no future time when we will have an chance to change.
2. Jesus was showing the difference between those who, in this life, depend on their wealth, and the poor who depend on Christ. A man's value is not in the things he owns, for all that we have has been given to us as a loan by God.
3. The Bible is God's appointed way of showing us the way to be saved. If we refuse to study God's Word and follow the instruction there, even if someone came back from the dead to warn us, we would not listen.

21. Where did Jesus tell His disciples He was going? John 14:2, 3. to His _____ house.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Note: If, as many people believe, Christians go to be with Jesus at death, why would Jesus tell His disciples that He would return to receive them to Himself?

Spiritism

22. What strong warning was given against those who had a familiar spirit and said they could talk to the dead? Leviticus 20:27. They were to be put to _____.

“A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”

Note: In Bible times there were spirit mediums who were called witches, wizards, and necromancers, who pretended to be able to talk with the dead. This was a deception of Satan, even as it is today, for God plainly stated that the dead do not know anything. It is Satan’s angels that pretend to be dead people and trick those who talk to them. So dangerous and terrible was this deception that God decreed that spirit mediums were to all be put to death.

Saul, the first king of Israel, was slain because he disobeyed God and tried to talk with the dead through a spirit medium. See 1 Samuel 28 and 1 Chronicles 10:13, 14. The messages that came through these mediums were messages from Satan’s evil angels.

Our Hope-the Resurrection

23. Who alone can redeem us from death and the grave? Revelation 1:18. Jesus has the _____.

“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Yes, it is Jesus who alone holds the key to the grave. If we believe in Him and obey His Word, we have the assurance of the resurrection power and the promise of eternal life in heaven. No human being has those keys!