

DEATH

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground (body), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (God given spirit), and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7, see also Proverbs 20:27). Of these, the Apostle Paul speaks in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. They are obviously divisible, you will note from Hebrews 4:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:8.

Death comes to all men. The Bible tells in Ecclesiastes 12:7 that “the dust (body) returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.” In Psalms 89:48 two great questions are asked –“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” (This latter expression is more correctly translated as “the power of Sheol”). Sheol or Hades is the place to which the souls of the unsaved sinners go (Luke 16:19-31) to await the final judgement of which we read in Revelation 20:11-15. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement” (Hebrews 9:27). However, there is possibility of deliverance and salvation of the sinner NOW (2 Corinthians 6:2), for the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Romans 1:16,17 and 10:9,10).

When a Christian dies, the Apostle Paul says the believer is “absent from the body ... present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6,8) who is in Heaven, “which is far better” - (Philippians 1:23). The body of the unbelieving thief was left on the cross, but that day he was in Paradise (Luke 23:43). The soul and spirit are given a heavenly covering (2 Corinthians 5:1-4) until the resurrection of the believer’s body (see 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). It will be “raised as a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44), “like His glorious body” (Philippians 3:20) for “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). The Lord Jesus ascended to Heaven after the resurrection (Acts 1:9-11), but He has promised to “come again” to receive Christians unto Himself, that where He is, there believers may be also (John 14:1-3). This is the blessed hope of all believers -- some day in Heaven, forever with the Lord.

The Psalmist expected much, for he said, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15; 16:11). “For we know in part...but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see in a mirror darkly (faintly): but then, face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known” (1 Corinthians 13:9,10,12).

CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER DEATH

The Bible implies conscious recognition after death, and I look forward to meeting the Lord Jesus and loved ones in the glory. Those with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8) knew one another, even though they had never met Moses and Elijah (who are identified in each of the accounts, not only by the writers of the Gospel records, but also by those present on the mount). There is every reason to believe that, in the spirit world, people recognize not only those whom they knew on earth, but everyone else there. This may be part of the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:12, “Then shall I know, even as also I am known.” The word KNOWN is in a form which means “to know fully.” There is no basis for thinking we shall lose our power of perception; rather, they would be enhanced. The rich man in hell was told to “remember” and perhaps he would have liked to forget. Read this solemn account in Luke 16:19-31. For the believer remembering will give occasion for praise and thanksgiving to God.

The Psalmist expected much, for he said “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15 and 16:11). Our natural body will be raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44), “like His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21), “we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). “For we know in part -- but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see in a mirror darkly (faintly); but then, face to face now we know in part, but then we shall be known even as also we are known” (1 Corinthians 13:9,10,12).

DO THOSE NOW WITH CHRIST HAVE AN AWARENESS OF EARTHLY AFFAIRS?

So far as I understand the Bible, those in heaven do not know what is taking place on earth. It would be difficult to see how those in heaven would have peace if they saw members of their families living in sin on earth, or were aware of loved ones in a lost eternity. We read in Luke 16 of the rich man being concerned about his five brothers on earth, but this seems to relate to what he remembered of them. There is no suggestion that he saw what they were doing at that time.

That the dead do not know what is happening on earth seems to be the force of the statement in Ecclesiastes 9:5, “...the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.” This is not saying (as some people teach) that the dead know nothing where they are. Rather, I take it, they no longer know, nor have any portion in what is taking place on earth. Heaven is not a projection of earth; it is an entirely different sphere. While we shall know one another there, those now living cannot communicate with those who have already died, nor are the dead any longer concerned with life on this earth.