

## Questions About The Dead

No. 51

### Introduction.

- I. There are many things that are common to our world. One of these things is death. Every day thousands of deaths occur in the world. Although death is very common among us, little is known about it. Modern man is asking numerous questions about death and about what lies beyond the grave.
- II. At this time let's consider some of these questions. It is important that we answer them from God's word. It is vital that we listen to what God says rather than listening to fallible human beings.

#### I. **Are The Dead Conscious?** Many have asked, "Are the dead conscious?"

A. Some **materialists** answer "no" to this question. They teach that all there is to man returns to the dust of the earth. They deny that man has an immortal soul that remains conscious after death.

1. Materialists often use **Ecclesiastes 9:5** as their proof text.

a. "For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything..."

b. They call attention to the words "the dead do not know anything." They argue from this verse that man is in a state of unconsciousness after death.

2. Let's read this verse in its context to see if it teaches this materialistic doctrine.

**Eccles. 9:5 For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.**

**Eccles. 9:6 Indeed their love, their hate, and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun.**

a. Solomon does not state absolutely that the dead do not know anything. Solomon states the dead do not know anything "under the sun."

b. Notice the qualifying phrase "under the sun."

c. Why do the dead not know anything "under the sun?" Why do the dead not know what is going on on the earth?

d. The answer is simple. They are no longer "under the sun." This does not mean that they are no longer conscious in some other place.

1) **For example, years ago I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma.** While I was there I was aware of what took place in my presence. Now I live in Waco and I am not aware of what is going on in Tulsa at this moment. This is far from saying that I am not alive and conscious in Waco.

2) So it is with the dead. They are not aware of what is going on "under the sun." They are, however, conscious.

B. The Bible teaches that man has an immortal soul or spirit which does not return to the earth, but lives on in a conscious state after death. (2 Sam. 12:23; Eccles. 12:7; Matt. 10:28; 17:1-4; 22:21, 32).

**REV 6:9** And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

**REV 6:10** and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

II. **Where Are The Dead?** Others have asked, "Where Are the dead?"

A. Many people contend the dead are already in heaven or hell.

1. Funeral speakers often say, "This individual has now gone on to the eternal home of the soul."
2. The Bible does not support this statement.

B. One of the thieves who was crucified with Christ, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." And He said, "Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (Lk. 23:39-43).

1. Christ and the thief journeyed to Paradise on that day.

- a. On the morning of His resurrection, Christ said to Mary who approached Him, "Touch me not. I am not yet ascended to the Father." (Jno. 20:17).
- b. Christ asserts here that He had not yet ascended to the Father in heaven. Since He was in Paradise on Friday, this means Paradise must not be heaven.

2. **Paradise** according to Greek scholars refer to the abode of the righteous spirits.

- a. When a person dies, his spirit goes to one of two places. The spirit of a righteous man goes to Abraham's bosom or Paradise. There it is in a state of bliss. The spirit of a wicked man goes to Hades or Tartarus. There it is in a state of torment.
- b. What I am saying is taught by our Lord in the account of the rich man and Lazarus. (Lk. 16:19-31).

**LUK 16:19** "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day.

**LUK 16:20** "And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

**LUK 16:21** and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

**LUK 16:22** "Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

**LUK 16:23** "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.

**LUK 16:24** "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'

**LUK 16:25** "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.'

**LUK 16:26** '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.'

**LUK 16:27** "And he said, 'Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house--

**LUK 16:28** for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

**LUK 16:29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'**

**LUK 16:30 "But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'**

**LUK 16:31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"**

b. From this passage we find that the dead are in a state of bliss or torment even before the judgment.

### C. Objections

1. Some object to this conclusion by saying the **account of the rich man and Lazarus is nothing but a parable.**
  - a. It is possible this is a parable, but it is not certain. It does not have the usual beginning of a parable. Parables usually begin something like this: "He spake unto a parable." "The kingdom of heaven is liken unto this."
  - b. Furthermore, parables **do not use proper names**, such as Abraham and Lazarus.
  - c. Even if this were a parable, it makes no difference. Parables are illustrations used to convey God's word.
2. Others object to this conclusion by saying, **"Why is a man punished or blessed before he is judged?"**
  - a. The answer to this question is found in the **nature of the judgment.** The judgment will not be for the purpose of determining guilt or innocence. The all-knowing God already knows this. The judgment will be the final pronouncement of innocence or guilt.
  - b. It will be the pronouncement of our eternal destination. The righteous will be rewarded with a home in heaven. The wicked will be sentenced to the eternal hell. Those in Abraham's bosom will continue to be blessed in heaven. Those in hades be cast into hell.

III. **Do The Dead Come Back To The Earth In Other Forms?** Another question that is often asked about the dead is, "Do the dead come back to the earth in other forms?"

A. There is a doctrine in the world known as "reincarnation."

1. The word "incarnation" means "to be clothed with flesh." The word "reincarnation" means "to be re-clothed in flesh."
2. **Advocates of this doctrine**, which number more than 400 million worldwide, teach that the souls of the dead return to the earth in new forms or bodies. The Hindus believe a man may be reborn a cow, a dog, a pig, or even an insect. Some believe a person may have another human existence.

B. The Bible refutes this doctrine. (Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gen. 1:26; Eccles. 12:9).

1. This theory is further refuted by **Moses and Elijah.** They were not reincarnated into some new body, such as a pig or cow.
2. When they appeared on the mount with Jesus, they retained their identities. They were recognizable, and there is not the slightest hint they were a pig or cow.

#### IV. **Can The Dead Speak To Us?** Still another question is, “Can the dead speak to us?”

##### A. **Spiritualists** answer “yes” to this question.

1. Spiritualists teach that departed spirits can communicate with the living. There are more than 200,000 enrolled Spiritualists in America.
2. One authority estimates that for every enrolled Spiritualist there are 10 to 15 more who are not enrolled. You can see that this is not a doctrine held by just a few people.

##### B. The Bible teaches, however, that the dead are not able to speak to the living.

1. **The account of the rich man and Lazarus proves this.** The rich man was not able to reach his brothers with a message. He was told that there was “a great chasm” or “a great gulf” fixed between them.
2. Spiritualism is also refuted by the fact that it has been shown time and time again that this doctrine is nothing more than a scheme to make money. Racketeers often charge someone, who has lost a loved one, a large sum of money promising communication from the dead. This communication always is a hoax coming from the living.

##### C. Even though the dead cannot speak to us directly, they can and do speak to us through the scriptures.

###### 1. The Hebrew writer said. (Heb. 11:4).

a. Notice here the words “He being dead yet speaketh.”

b. Abel speaks to us and teaches us a very important lesson. In order to determine the message of Abel it is necessary to study several passages.

1) **Relate the account of Cain and Abel.** (Gen. 4:1-5).

2) Some have thought that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice because He was partial to him. This is far from being the truth. (Acts 10:34, 35).

3) **Hebrews 11:4** says his sacrifice was acceptable because it was “by faith.” Romans 10:17 states that “faith comes from hearing the word of Christ.” Since faith comes from hearing, this means that God must have spoken to Cain and Abel and told them the kind of sacrifice He wanted. He wanted a bloody sacrifice. Abel obeyed the command and Cain did not.

4) **This should teach us a lesson on obedience.** Abel says, “God is only pleased when we obey His commandments.” (Matt. 7:21).

###### 2. **The rich man and Lazarus being dead also speak to us.**

a. The **rich man says**, “Do not believe that death is the end of it all. Look at me. I am in anguish. Don’t come to this place whatever you do.”

b. **Lazarus teaches** us a lesson. He says, “Live a faithful life. It is worth every sacrifice you have to make. Look at me. I am in a state of eternal bliss.”

#### **Conclusion.**

I. I hope you have listened to each of these men speak. I pray that you will live a faithful life, that you may enjoy the eternal blessings of God.

II. **A hotel bellboy in Toledo, Ohio, once went to his room to take a nap.** Two attorneys came to his room to bring him some good news. When they knocked on the door, the bellboy cried out, “Get away from the door.”

But they kept knocking, and when he finally opened the door, they told him he had inherited \$25,000.

III. **Christ knocks at the door of our hearts** and we say, "Get away." But He comes only to bring us the best things in this life and the life to come. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." But I tell you the latch is on the inside. Only you can open the door. Will you open your heart to Christ today? Surrender to Him! He will come in and save and bless you. Come as we stand and sing!

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