
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: ***Is there a conscious existence after death?***

We are addressing this question because many today reject the Biblical doctrine of hell. It is unreasonable to them that God should cast a sinner in hell and allow him to be tormented day and night forever and ever.

To avoid the truth of the Scriptures, they have theorized that the souls of men simply sleep in a state of unconsciousness when they die. Obviously, then, if you are unconscious, you cannot suffer punishment in hell.

Does the Bible actually teach this, or does it teach that a man retains his awareness even after he dies?

DEATH IS "SEPARATION"

To answer the question, we must first ask, "*What is death?*" Death, according to the Bible, means "*separation.*"

James 2:26

²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Notice carefully that when the body and spirit are "*separated,*" death has occurred. Biblically speaking, then, when a man dies, his body and spirit are "*separated.*"

Ecclesiastes 12:7

⁷ Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

This spirit of man that returns to God is fully cognizant of its surroundings. This is what makes man different from a beast (Ecc 3:21).

A DIFFICULT PASSAGE

In Ecclesiastes there is a passage which seems to suggest that a man does lose consciousness when he dies:

Ecclesiastes 9:5

⁵ For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten.

This verse seems to teach the dead become unconscious or cease to exist because they do not "know" anything. However, the next verse clarifies what is meant:

Ecclesiastes 9:6

⁶ ... Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun.

Solomon is simply saying that the dead "*know not anything under the sun.*" That is, they know nothing about what is taking place on this earth which is "*under the sun.*" They are unaware of events which take place on earth, but that is a far cry from saying the dead are unconscious!

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

The NT is even more decisive and plain on this subject than the OT.

Matthew 22:31-32

³¹ "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,

³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Jesus declared that, "*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*" Had Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ceased to exist when they died, God would have had to say, "*I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*" But by saying, "*I am* (present tense) *the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,*" He illustrated the fact that these saints still had a conscious existence.

Matthew 10:28

²⁸ "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

When men kill the body, there is a soul which they cannot kill that returns to God and He will either reward or punish that soul.

Luke 23:43

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

That very day the thief on the cross was going to be with Jesus in paradise, but this would have been impossible if men lost consciousness at the point of death.

Once Jesus told a story about a rich man who refused to help a poor beggar named Lazarus:

Luke 16:22-26

²² "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

²³ "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

²⁵ "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

²⁶ 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

This story illustrates in unmistakable language that there is a conscious existence for both saints and sinners after death!

Furthermore, this passage declares plainly that a "great gulf" is "fixed" between paradise and torments and no one can cross over to the other side. Once a man dies, his destiny is sealed! There is no second chance. There is no purgatory, nor second chance of any kind to alter one's destiny!

SUMMARY

Since we have only one chance to prepare for eternity, we had better take advantage of the present time! We know not when we shall die, nor do we know the day that the Lord will come again. It behooves all of us to prepare for the Judgment Day of God!

My friend, the Bible teaches ever so clearly that there is indeed a conscious existence after death for both saints and sinners.

If it seems difficult to imagine how a loving God could punish men forever and ever in hell, just think about this: God sent His own Son to die on a cross so we could be saved. God's own Son suffered, bled and died so we could be saved. Surely if hell were not real Jesus wouldn't have done this! If we reject the great and loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then we certainly deserve a conscious, everlasting punishment in a lake of fire!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.