

## IX. What Happened When Old Testament Saints Died?

There is an interesting statement found on eleven occasions in the Old Testament. It speaks of one dead as being “gathered to his people.” This phrase is never used in the New Testament. Here are a few examples:

“Then **Abraham** gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was **gathered to his people.**” (Genesis 25:8).

“And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was **gathered unto his people.**” (Genesis 25:17).

“And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was **gathered unto his people:**” (Deuteronomy 32:50).

This statement has perplexed Bible students for years. Some believe it just means that the dead body becomes the possession of the living relatives to bury where they want.

Others believe the statement refers to an afterlife reunion with loved ones.

Some of the newer versions (perversions) do not tackle this subject – they merely delete these words without any explanation.

Matthew Henry in his commentary put it, “His body was gathered to the congregation of the dead, and his soul to the congregation of the blessed.”

Where was this gathering of Old Testament saints? It was to the place referred to by Christ in Luke 16:19-31. As you read it, notice the six references to Abraham:

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And 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. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31).

This word hell comes from “Hades” which means “the place of departed souls.” It appears to be in two compartments within eyesight of each other. One for the damned, a place of torment. The other for the blessed, a place of comfort.

The Old Testament saints were considered “captives” of that place within the heart of the earth until Jesus came and led them out at His resurrection. Jesus’ soul went into hell (Hades) when he died:

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (Acts 2:27).

“He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:31).

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40).

This intriguing story of Samuel shows us how he was brought up from the lower parts of the earth by the request of King Saul with the help of the witch of Endor.

“Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, **Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?** And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.” (I Samuel 28:11).

Samuel said he was “disquieted” when he was brought up. He appeared to have been in quiet comfort, resting. This would reconcile Christ’s teaching about Hades with Abraham, who was comforted.

## X. What Happened When Old Testament Sinners Died?

People in the Old Testament days were either converted or unconverted (see Psalm 51:13).

The truths that we saw under the last point also apply here. These departed souls also go into Hades (hell) but into the place of torment where the Rich Man was (see Luke 16:19-31 again).

The Old Testament saints were resurrected when Jesus rose from the grave. They ascended into heaven. Those that were sinners remained in the same place. There is no reference to them ever coming out.

## XI. What Happens When New Testament Sinners Die?

Jesus continued to propound the doctrine of hell throughout His public ministry. He strongly warned people to repent, to be sure they did not go there.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matthew 5:22).

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” (Matthew 5:29-30).

“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.” (Matthew 10:28).

“Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.” (Matthew 18:8-9).

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33).

Many other verses could be listed here. These are just some from Matthew. Those who die today without Christ join those of old who died without faith in the Lord. They are suffering in hell, which is located in the lower parts of the earth.

## XII. What Happens When New Testament Saints Die?

**First**, our bodies go into the grave waiting the resurrection. Note the differences between our current bodies and our resurrected bodies: “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is **raised in incorruption**: It is sown in dishonour; it is **raised in glory**: it is sown in weakness; it is **raised in power**: It is sown a natural body; it is **raised a spiritual body**. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.**” (I Corinthians 15:35-49).

This new glorified body will be created anew at the instant of the rapture. “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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.” (I Corinthians 15:51-52).

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (I Thessalonians 4:13).

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:20).

**Second**, our spirit and soul go upward to be with God in Heaven immediately upon death. There is no soul sleep or waiting.

Remember, when Jesus died, His spirit went immediately up to the Father in heaven. Jesus never ceased to exist. His physical body died. His soul and spirit did not. His soul went into hell (Acts 2:27,31). His spirit went up to the Father. “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” (Luke 23:46).

Likewise our spirit and soul go upward to be with God immediately upon death. “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire **to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:**” (Philippians 1:21-23).

“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to **be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.** Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” (II Corinthians 5:6-9).

Old Testament saints went into Hades (Abraham's Bosom) for a time of rest. This was already covered under Point IX.

### **New Testament saints go directly to heaven upon their death:**

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42).

“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.” (John 14:3).

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24).

“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 1:11).

**Just a Thought:** If the Old Testament saints were emptied out of Hades and taken to heaven, and the New Testament saints go directly to heaven, then seances (the practice of bringing up saints or departed loved ones) are a farce.