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Conducted by  
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**"IN recent weeks we have been discussing from 2 Corinthians 5:10, and in connection with this Luke 15:19-31. With these scriptures in mind, would you please comment on the question "When we die, what happens"? "**

There are those who say that questions like this should not be asked nor discussed because a definitive answer cannot be given this side of the grave; I do not subscribe to this theory. There is one fact which is inescapable and that is that we must all die at some time or other. This being so, it seems to me that christians should want to prepare themselves for that great event. We shall be best prepared if we understand the things concerning the 'here', and as much as is revealed concerning the 'hereafter'. Before we can proceed any further with the question I think we need to state some fundamental truths.

#### What is Man?

"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" (Gen. 2:7). Here we are told of the transition of man from one state to another. God created man out of the dust of the ground, presumably inanimate until God breathed into him the breath of life.

So here we have the transition. The inanimate flesh is now animated by the impartation of the Spirit (life) of God; man becomes (this implies he was not before) a living soul. This, then, is the divine revelation of the constitution of man – body, soul, and spirit.

Further to this, if we reason objectively then we must say that God is life and God is eternal. Therefore, the life given by the Eternal must of necessity be eternal life, and because the life is eternal then in the same terms it must be indestructible. This cannot apply to the flesh, but must refer to the soul of man; in his reasoning on the hereafter, Paul refers to the immortality of the soul (1 Cor. 15:54).

When Adam and Eve fell, God imposed the limitations on the flesh, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). God had previously warned that death would ensue from disobedience (Gen. 2:17). This was the death of the flesh; for the destination of the soul we shall have to enquire further.

#### The Spiritual Man

God wants man to see beyond the death of the flesh. The flesh gets in the way and obstructs the greater glory. As Paukargues, "Wherefore henceforth we know no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:16,17). At the beginning of the chapter Paul indicates the dualism of the spiritual men "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved (the flesh), we have a building of God (immortal) not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). Here we are taught that concurrent with the dissolution of the flesh there is the continueing development and growth of the new spiritual creature. To what end? So that it, too, can perish with the flesh? I think not.

Jesus himself made it perfectly clear that not only was there to be a continuation of life pertaining to goodness, but also pertaining to damnation, "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" (John 5:28,29). So then we have arrived at the following:—

- 1 that God created man physically of the physical elements of the ground.
- 2 He animated the physical by breathing into" it the divine element of life. The physical then 'clothed' the soul that lived.
- 3 He interposed the 'death of the physical because of disobedience (here we can only conclude that deeds done in the body are motivated by responses of the 'inner man' to either good or evil).
- 4 He indicated that the destination of the soul, after judgement, should be either to heaven or hell.

#### The Judgement Seat

2 Cor. 5:10 states, "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". When Paul says that we must appear before the judgement-seat, what does he mean? HE certainly cannot mean the fleshy body because that will have gone, therefore he must mean that essential being which is in every one of us, and which God can cloth with a body as it pleaseth Him.

The Greek word used is BEMA, and it denotes a Divine tribunal before which all believers are to be manifested in the hereafter. In Rom. 14:10 it is called 'the judgement seat of God' (R.V.). If we read John 5:22,27 we read that God has given Jesus authority to execute judgement. So the judgment-seat of Christ, and what the Revisors have called the judgment seat of God are one and the same tribunal. The judgement-seat of Christ is to be distinguished from the 'Great Assize' as depicted in Matt. 25:31 ff. and also from the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11) when the book of life will be opened and all 'the dead' will appear, to be judged from it. Christ's presence with his saints, after his return, will be the time when the judgment-seat of Christ will be convened.

It is not our purpose at this juncture to enquire into the nature of the judgment; suffice it to say that if our soul has been separated from our body before that notable day, then it seems that our body will have suffered its elemental fate but our soul will be in conscious existence in some place. We now need to turn our attention to the location of that place.

#### Abraham's Bosom

To recline in the bosom was said of one who so reclined at table that his head rested on and covered, as it were, the bosom of the one next to him (see John 13:23). Figuratively, the phrase 'in the bosom of' denotes a place of blessedness and honour. Hence, of Jesus and his relationship with his Father, "The Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). So with Lazarus. he was in Abraham's bosom, a place of blessedness and honour. I believe this place to be the Paradise of God. You will remember, of course, the promise of Jesus to the repentant robber was fulfilled the same day. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). I also believe that this was the place the Apostle Paul saw when he was caught up into the third heaven, "How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). Incidentally, you will notice the expression that Paul uses, "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth", confirming our prior reasoning that the essential being is either inside or outside the body (the flesh) but very much alive anyhow. Lazarus. no doubt, was very happy to be where he was.

But what of the rich man? He was very much conscious of his predicament; he was in torment. In the N.T. the Revisors have always used the rendering 'Hades' instead of the A.V. 'hell'. Hades is the region of departed spirits of the lost. You will recall that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, referred to the fact that David had prophesied that Jesus would be raised to sit on his (David's) throne. Peter then goes on, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell (hades), neither his flesh did see corruption" (Read fully the discourse of Peter in Acts 2).

Hades, evidently, never denotes the grave nor is it the permanent region of the lost. It seems that it is the intermediate place before the final doom of Gehenna. The condition of Hades is as described in Luke 16.

### Conclusion

Well, what has our study taught us?

1. The flesh, the 'outer man', perishes – the soul, the 'inner man', has a conscience existence in the hereafter.
2. That conscious existence will be either in paradise or hades.
3. The difference between the judgement of all men and the judgment of the saints. (You will have become aware by now, of course, that a certain judgment has already taken place, i.e., the destination of souls relative to certain conditions has already been fixed by the way those souls have acted while in the flesh).
4. It seems that the Judgment-seat of Christ will be set up at His Parousia, i.e. His Presence with the saints after his second coming.

What else can we say? Nothing, I believe, except to ensure that we are heading for the place where Christ is, and that we are actively engaging ourselves in trying to prevent souls from going to Hades, and ultimately to Gehenna.