

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-26 Death and the Grave

In our previous lessons we learned that God is a God of order and law. We also discovered that some of Satan's angels broke God's laws and were bound in chains and are now awaiting their final judgment. From this Satan learned very quickly that he too must obey God's laws and thus he is very careful in his dealings with mankind. We have witnessed his care to obey God's laws in how he dealt with Job and Peter.

We all might ask, "How can this be?" Every human would say that Satan is their enemy and has done terrible things to them. After all, the name Satan can be translated as the 'adversary.' He is our enemy. Satan has chosen to get his revenge against God by destroying we who were created to be God's children. How is it that Satan can keep from breaking God's rules, while at the same time causing us such harm?

The answer is rather surprising. Satan uses God's own laws against us! Jesus said that Satan is the father of all lies. Satan will say or do anything to deceive us into disobeying God's laws. He knows that disobedience is sin and that the payment for sin is death. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians who lived in Rome. In this letter he taught them about the nature of sin and what every man or woman should expect. Paul wrote: "For the wages [or payment] of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).

It is also written that "the one who sins shall die" (Ezek 18:20). From these Bible verses we learn that everyone who sins comes under the sentence of death. Therefore, Satan's plan is to deceive every human being into sinning. Everyone sins, and thus everyone dies. Satan does not have to break any laws to destroy us; he only has to encourage us to follow our fallen nature. For Satan—his war against God by destroying us, God's children—is in one sense very easy. Everyone sins, and thus everyone dies.

What happens to a person's soul when he dies? The apostle Paul teaches us that when a Christian dies, his soul immediately ascends to the presence of God. But this is not how it was before Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus himself told a story about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. This is a wonderful story that Jesus told to the rich lawyers called Pharisees. Here is part of the story Jesus told:

Now there was a rich man who dwelt in a great house. The house had many rooms and a large courtyard with a gate. This man would wear very expensive clothes that could only be afforded by the very rich and by royalty. He would throw lavish parties where he and his wealthy friends would dine on the most delicious foods and enjoy the finest entertainment that gold could buy. Life was very good for the rich man. But there was one thing that annoyed him. Each day a beggar covered with sores would be laid near the gate to his mansion. The beggar's name was Lazarus. The dogs came and licked his sores.

One day Lazarus died and his soul was carried away by angels. His soul descended into the grave to a place called Paradise. Sometime later, the rich man died and his soul was carried

down into the grave by fallen angels. But he was not taken to the place called Paradise. Rather, he was taken down into the hot flames of hell.

The rich man looked up from hell and far away he could see the beggar Lazarus and the Old Testament patriarch, Abraham. The rich man called out to Abraham, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame."

But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things. But now he is being comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm so that those who wish to come over here to you will not be able, nor can anyone cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:24).

From this story Jesus taught that before He came, the grave was divided into two places. Paradise was the place where all of the souls of righteous people went, and a second place of fire and torment was the place into which the wicked descended. Together, Paradise and what we call hell, was the grave. And the grave was the great prison which held all of the souls of mankind—for everyone sinned and the wages or payment of sin was death.

You might wonder why the souls of those who served God in the Old Testament descended into the prison of the grave. Didn't they offer many sacrifices? We will learn in a future lesson an important truth; the blood of animals cannot pay the price for human sin. And thus, although these great saints of the Old Testament loved and tried to serve God, they were still guilty of breaking God's law. They had all sinned. And the wages of sin is death.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches that we all will die because we have all sinned. Satan's plan is to deceive every person into sinning and breaking God's law.

The **main truth** in this lesson is that Jesus taught the grave had been divided into two places. Paradise was the place where the righteous went at death, and a second place of fire and torment was the place where the wicked descended into at death.

Let's **review** what you learned in this lesson.

1. The grave is divided into two places. What are the two places in the grave called?
A. [Pause 5 seconds] If you said, "Paradise and hell," you are correct.
2. What did the apostle Paul teach is the wages of sin? [Pause]
A. If you said, "The wages of sin is death," then you answered correctly.
3. If Satan obeys God's Laws, how does he attack us? [Pause]
A. If you said, "He tries to deceive us into being disobedient to God," then you are right.

Your **assignment** is to review this lesson as many times as is necessary to understand how Satan uses God's laws to result in our destruction. Learn the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus and what Jesus taught about the grave. Then tell someone what you have learned.