

What Lies Beyond the Grave?

By Terry Smith

All of us have wondered at some point in time about what lies beyond this life. However, death is a subject we often avoid as much as possible, so the questions we have may continue to go unresolved. Questions about the afterlife may plague us when we are forced to deal with the death of loved ones or acquaintances. Sometimes the shock of a tragic event that suddenly claims thousands of lives rekindles these questions in our minds. We know life is uncertain and death is inevitable, but still few of us are prepared to embrace that moment in our own lives when we will cross over to encounter what lies beyond the grave. Remember the thousands who entered their work areas and began their daily routines in the Twin Towers on September 11? Without warning their lives on this earth abruptly came to an end. Many of them left home that morning without a thought of life after death or if they were prepared to leave this world. Do you know where you would be right now if you had been among those who died that day?

April of last year we buried my cousin, a close, lifelong friend and brother in Christ. Only three months after he was diagnosed with cancer, he passed from this life to the next. In those three short months, I watched a strong, healthy, middle-aged man deteriorate into a frail, helpless, whisper of a man. He could not even move from one place to another without assistance. Sometime during that last bit of time we had together, I remember asking him, “When the angels come to take you to Paradise, who will be the first person you look to find and what question will you ask them?” His answer was not a family member or close friend as you might think. He gave me the name of a faithful servant of God he had never met but had grown to love and admire through his study of the Scriptures. What questions do you have regarding that last journey from this life into the next? Are you still wondering what happens beyond the tombstone? If you are unsure about what awaits us in the next life, then allow Jesus to open the door for you as He relates an account in Luke 16:19-31. There you will discover that after someone dies, he enters the realm of Hades. Jesus describes this realm of the dead as being divided into two sections. One section is referred to as “a place of torment” and the other side is referred to as “Abraham’s side,” a place of contentment. Jesus also refers to this side of the

Haden realm as “Paradise” in Luke 23:43, as did the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. Read Luke 16 carefully and notice all of the things that are possible in this realm of the dead.

One of the major thoughts Jesus presents in the afterlife story of Luke 16 is how one man spent his lifetime acquiring the temporary comforts of material wealth but was totally unprepared for the eternal comfort God offers. In contrast, another man--who appeared to be a failure in this life--was actually well prepared for the eternal blessings of life after death. This man had wisely invested in the one thing that outlasts our lives on earth—an eternal relationship with the Lord. The poor man was not in Paradise because he was poor, and the rich man was not in Torment because he was rich. The rich man was in Torment because he had placed wealth above doing the things God requires in order for us to have a relationship with Him. Until we breathe our last breath, we have the opportunity to choose where our journey beyond the grave will lead us. Even though the details of death may remain a mystery, we can be certain of our destination based on the facts provided in God’s Word. Do you know for sure where you stand in the question of eternity? If you are unsure or if you have unanswered questions, please email me – trs1331@hotmail.com.