

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

# THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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## Home of the Soul

The word "soul" can have different meanings in Scripture. One way it is used is to describe the part of us that exists in conjunction with our physical body. It is the part of us that is eternal.

As we live here on earth, the "home" for our soul is our body. At physical death, the soul departs from the body (cf. **Jas. 2:26; Gen. 35:18**). The body returns to the dust of the earth from which it came (**Gen. 3:19; Ecc. 12:7**). The soul, however, continues on.

If physical death comes before the Day of Judgment, the soul goes to a realm called Hades. This realm is described in **Luke 16:19-31**.

In Hades, there are some who are in "*torments*" (**Luke 16:23**; cf. **verse 28**). The "*rich man*" in **Luke 16** was in this place. He was in so much pain that he asked for Lazarus to "*dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool [his] tongue*" (**verse 24**).

Lazarus, on the other hand, was in a place described as "*Abraham's bosom*" (**verse 22**). This place is also referred to as "*paradise*" by Jesus in **Luke 23:43**. Paradise is a place where souls are "*comforted*" (**Luke 16:25**).

The rich man's request and Abraham's response in **verses 27-31** make it clear that what determines whether one's soul is in paradise or torment is whether one has obeyed God while on earth.

Like our physical bodies, Hades is a *temporary* home for the soul. When Christ returns, "*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 5:28b-29**).

This resurrection is the point at which our souls will be sent to our eternal destination. All who have ever lived will stand before our Lord to be judged according to our deeds (**2 Cor. 5:10**). At this point, Christ will send the unrighteous "*away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*" (**Matt. 25:46**).

Hell is a *real* place that "*many*" really are headed toward (**Matt. 7:13**).

Notice that Jesus stated that those sent to hell will be in "*everlasting punishment*." Those who are not allowed to enter heaven will not simply cease to exist. Their souls will face torment that is never-ending.

The Greek word for this place of eternal torment is "geenna" (*Strong G1067*). Eleven of the twelve times this word is used in the New Testament, it is used by Jesus. He spoke of hell frequently. He described hell as a place of "*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*" (**Matt. 25:41**). He described hell as a place of "*outer darkness*" where "*there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (**Matt. 8:12**). He emphasized the never-ending torment of hell when describing "*the fire that never shall be quenched*" (**Mark 9:43**).

The darkness of hell is never more evident than in **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**: *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of*

*the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*

Hell is a place where souls will be *eternally separated from God*. Unlike the unrighteous on earth, souls in hell have no hope of repenting and turning to God.

This may sound harsh, and we may wonder why our Lord spoke so much of hell. Perhaps the reason is that He loves us and wants us to be warned.

Instead of taking the path that leads to hell, Christ desires us to do the will of the Father, and thus be with Him in heaven for eternity (cf. **Matt. 7:21**).

Heaven is a real place where God resides (cf. **Matt. 6:9; 7:21b**). It is where Jesus ascended back to after He was resurrected (**Luke 24:51**).

Heaven is a place where souls will be in the eternal presence of God. The “*new Jerusalem*” of **Revelation 21** (possibly symbolizing the church on earth, but likely symbolizing the redeemed in heaven) is described as a place where there is “*no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*” (**Rev. 21:23**). It is a “*holy city*” (**verse 2**) where “*there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain*” (**verse 4**).

While nothing good is said about hell, nothing bad is said about heaven.

Reflecting on these different possible “homes” of the soul causes one to understand that there is much more to our existence than our time on earth. In fact, our life on earth is “*even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (**Jas. 4:14**).

Living only for the “here and now” is shortsighted. The “success” we have on earth is of little importance if we fail to please God.

Consider the contrast between the rich man and Lazarus’ lives on earth, and the condition of their souls after they left earth. Abraham told the rich man “*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*” (**Luke 16:25**).

The rich man appeared to “have it made,” but truly the poor beggar was in a far better state than him. The rich man learned the hard way that earthly wealth profits nothing if one’s soul spends eternity being tormented (cf. **Matt. 16:26**).

The rich man wished some things could change when his soul was in torment. He could not change his state though. He was told by Abraham that there is a “*great gulf fixed*” between paradise and torment, and no one can pass from one side to the other (**Luke 16:26**). The point of the verse for us is that our eternal fate will be sealed when we pass away, or when Jesus returns, whichever comes first.

Christ’s return could come at any moment. Those who wonder when the end time will be need only read **Matthew 24:36**: *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

“*The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*” (**2 Pet. 3:10**). We must therefore be ready at all times (**Matt. 24:42**).

Life takes on a different perspective when we understand how temporary a “home of the soul” our physical bodies are. During our brief time here, may we live in such a way that we will be comforted, and not tormented, when our souls depart from this earth.

**-Michael Hickox**

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