

The Weird Stuff

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Date: 11 October 2025

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- [0 : 00] 2 Kings chapter 6, starting at verse 8. Once, when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, He took counsel with his servants, saying, At such and such a place shall be my camp.
- But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there. And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him.
- Thus he used to warn him so that he saved himself there more than once or twice. And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing. And he called his servants and said to them, Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?
- And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king. But Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom. And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.
- It was told him, Behold, he is in Dothan. So he sent their horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city.
- [1 : 13] And the servant said, Alas, my master, what shall we do? He said, Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.
- So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around. And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, Please strike this people with blindness.
- So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. And Elisha said to them, This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. And he led them to Samaria.
- As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, O Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see. So the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw. And behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.
- As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down? He answered, You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow?
- [2 : 22] Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. So he prepared for them a great feast. And when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.
- Right. Let's pray. So, Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open and all desires known, have mercy upon us. You know our frailties and weaknesses and sins, and you know our subject this weekend is too immense for us to comprehend.

Please enlighten us by your word this morning. Keep us from letting our emotions overrule your word. And yet keep us from being unemotional or unmoved by what your word reveals.

Take away the lies of Satan that blind us. And help us to behold ever more clearly your glory and your goodness, revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. And in your eternal plan to gather people into heaven and condemn people to hell.

For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, friends. Well, today I want to spend most of our time sort of filling in the blanks about some of the questions that we tend to assume when we're talking about heaven and hell.

[3 : 38] And that I assumed yesterday. Right? So yesterday we talked about the difficulty of this topic and heaven and hell and God's glory. But we didn't actually really define what heaven and hell are.

Right? Did we? So that's what I want to talk about today. Basically across both sessions, it's sort of one long talk split into two. Now I should warn you that, you know, in all my reading in preparation for this weekend, I found this subject so just intellectually challenging.

It almost broke me. And I've had to change my mind on a bunch of things. So I'm definitely stretching beyond my capacities here. And maybe you will too.

Because the problem, you see, going back to yesterday, the problem is that I'm a secularist. Despite my best intentions and what's in my heart of hearts, I still think like a secularist, a materialist in a bunch of different ways.

But I know that the Bible doesn't present reality that way. It's not as if in the Bible the existence of God or the spiritual realm is doubted or downplayed or in the background.

[4 : 49] No, it's often asserted and always assumed. God is at the center of things. And the spiritual realm, the eternal things, is where it's really at.

There's sort of more substance in the other world than there is in this world. So how do we get this right sense of perspective to dominate our thinking? That's my trouble. And since I suspect that it might be yours as well, this morning, before we get into the nuts and bolts of things, I want to just try and encourage you to dive off the deep end with me and think about all the crazy things in the Bible that shake up our secularist worldview.

Okay, so my question, if you like, is I know you believe the Bible, but do you believe in the world that the Bible presents? Or to put it another way, do you believe in all the weird stuff like angels and demons?

Apparently, Francis Schaeffer, a great Christian thinker from the mid-20th century, whenever he was asked to speak at a university mission, he would always mention in his first talk something about angels.

And when he was asked why he did that, it was because he found that when he just spoke about God and sin, people thought that he was speaking about morality, just sort of religion or ethics.

[6 : 12] So it did nothing to shake them out of their secularism, out of the imminent frame, if you know what I mean. That's the imminent frame, not the imminent frame. Okay, you might need to look it up.

Catherine and I were discussing whether you might need to look it up. Anyway, but when he spoke about, imminent is the opposite of transcendent. So when he spoke about angels, all of a sudden people realized he was speaking about something much bigger, something transcendent, something spiritual.

So in a similar vein, I guess, that's what I want to talk to you about this morning, the weird stuff. Like in Genesis chapter 6, verses 1 to 4, do you believe that the sons of God, i.e. spiritual beings, angels, really descended to earth and had sexual relations with human women producing a race of hybrid giants, a.k.a. the Nephilim?

Because I think that's what that passage is about. And are these the same sons of God mentioned in the book of Job and in Psalm 82, the divine council or the heavenly parliament where God sits among them and does Satan really gather when they gather?

Or when Moses stood before Pharaoh. How did the magicians turn their sticks into snakes or the water into blood using their secret arts?

[7 : 41] There's no hint in the text that this didn't really happen. In fact, just the opposite. And I'm not really sure how they could do the frogs, but they couldn't do the gnats. What's the difference?

And we could go on, right, by talking about talking donkeys and disembodied hands writing on walls and mediums and ghosts and so on.

We'll get to that. And of course, in the New Testament, the weird stuff doesn't die down. I mean, if anything, it ramps up around Jesus especially. Luke tells us that angels appeared to the shepherds at Jesus' birth and an angel helped Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Mark tells us angels were ministering to Jesus in the wilderness. The book of Hebrews tells us that at times we might accidentally, unwittingly be showing hospitality to angels.

They're all over the place. So what are we to make of all this stuff? Which is why I wanted to read 2 Kings chapter 6 for us this morning. Because what I think I want for you all and for myself is a kind of Gehazi moment.

[8 : 48] Gehazi is the name of Elisha's servant in this passage. And I love this story. The situation is that the king of Syria is annoyed because Elisha keeps telling the king of Israel about all his military plans.

So he is greatly troubled by this. He can't understand why he never seems to be able to catch the king of Israel. He thinks he must have a mole among his servants or something like that.

And one of his servants said, No, no, my lord. You know, the prophet who's in Israel, Elisha, he keeps telling the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom. I love that line.

Right? The prophet in Israel seems to know things. Somehow he knows what you whisper to yourself behind closed doors, you know, or on your pillow.

Ironically then, the king of Syria decides to send his army to try and capture Elisha. And it's ridiculous, of course, but, you know, what else can he do? Right? He's got a hammer. Every problem looks like a nail.

[9 : 48] So in verse 13, Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him. It was told to him, Behold, he is in Dothan. So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night, as if that's really going to help, and surrounded the city.

Now, verse 15, the crucial verse, or the crucial section. When the servant of the man of God, that's Gehazi, Elisha's servant, when he rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city, and the servant said, Alas, my master, what shall we do?

He said, Don't be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see. So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

See, in a sense, that is what I want God to do for us this morning. The chariots were always there, but Gehazi couldn't see them. And likewise with us, I want God to impress upon us the reality of the spiritual realm so that we don't live our lives like Gehazi, just oblivious to it.

I think that probably, just like me, most of you believe in heaven and hell already, but perhaps a little too much in theory and not in practice.

[11 : 16] I mentioned yesterday a classic secularist trick to watch out for, where they try and divide or drive a sharp wedge between the things that we know and the things that we believe.

Right? So there are things that we know, like that the sky is blue and two plus two equals four and the earth revolves around the sun and Hitler invaded Poland and my wife loves me.

Right? All sorts of things that we know with different ways that we've come to know each of them, varying degrees of confidence maybe about each of them. I'm pretty confident about the last one. Anyway. But we know them and we interact, we act on them and we interact with them every day.

But then, so the secularists tell us, you mustn't say that you really know things about God or heaven and hell or the spiritual realm, angels and demons and all that stuff.

Right? Because these are not things that we can know. These are only things that we believe. Right? These are matters of faith. And, you know, faith's great, that's good for you.

[12 : 22] But when we're talking about things that we know, keep faith out of it. Right? Keep quiet about faith. But friends, this distinction is entirely unbiblical and completely nonsense.

The Bible is written about things that God wants us to know. And in fact, faith is absolutely crucial to knowing anything. If you're a scientist and you don't trust your instruments, you're not going to learn anything.

Or you don't trust your eyes or your brain or your teachers or anything or anyone. You'll never know anything. Faith is absolutely essential to knowledge. So, suffice to say, I want to talk about the weird stuff this morning.

And my aim is that we might have even just a little bit more clarity about the spiritual realm and what we can know from God's trustworthy word. And then, of course, I want us to act on what we know.

To take what we know and act on it in various ways. Does that make sense? Okay, so that's my aim. Okay, so the technical term for our subject this morning is cosmology. The cosmos is the world or the universe, particularly referring to the structure or the orderliness of the universe, how the universe is arranged.

[13 : 41] So cosmology is the study of the structure of the universe. What we learn in the Bible, what we know from the Bible, is that there are, broadly speaking, three realms.

So some of you will have seen this diagram before. You've got the three realms there, heaven, earth, and Sheol. So if you think of Philippians 2, verse 10, remember Paul says that because Jesus died on the cross, therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

See those three different spaces or realms that God has made? There's heaven up there, there's earth, which is sort of the thin plane between the two places, and then there's under the earth down there.

Now you can divide these three spaces even further, right? For instance, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 2, Paul says, I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body, I don't know, God knows.

And you see that little phrase, the third heaven, that's because Paul, the Bible, distinguishes between the atmospheric heavens, where the air is and where the birds fly around, the celestial heavens, where the planets and stars exist, what we would call space, and then the highest heavens, where God is, seated on his throne, heaven, what we might typically call heaven, right?

[15 : 12] But the three heavens in the Bible are the sky, space, and then heaven. Now, I think we're all pretty familiar with earth, so we'll skip over that for now and have a little think about under the earth, right?

Earth is divided into various spaces, isn't it? Anyway, nations and so on and territories, but we'll just head below. In the Bible, there are a few different names for the places and spaces under the earth. The most common one in the Old Testament is Sheol, which, again, you can see on the diagram.

In the LXX and in the New Testament, Sheol is translated Hades. So in Numbers chapter 16, for instance, when Korah and his mates have accused Moses of exalting himself above the rest of the congregation, in verse 28, Moses said, Hereby you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works and that it has not been of my own accord.

If these men die as all men die or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord creates something new and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord.

And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods so that they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol and the earth closed over them and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

[16 : 49] See, Sheol is down there. Sheol is under the earth. Now, of course, we tend to think of the space down there purely in materialistic, scientific ways.

Sometimes people would translate Sheol as the grave as if it just refers to kind of six feet under. But really, it's not just the grave in our modern secularist sense.

It's the underworld and it's the realm of the dead. So that's where Moses is saying Korah descended. His body went down there but human beings aren't just bodies.

His soul went down there too because down there there is both a physical space and a spiritual underworld. And it's not just wicked people in the Old Testament who go down into Sheol.

It's the place where everyone goes. So for instance, at the end of the book of Genesis when Jacob thinks that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal, Moses tells us all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him but he refused to be comforted and said, no, I shall go down to Sheol to my son mourning.

[17 : 58] Thus his father wept for him. So Jacob is expecting to go down to Sheol and that's where he thinks that Joseph is and will be waiting for him. And this lines up with various comments about Abraham and Isaac and Ishmael and Moses and Aaron and everyone.

How when they died they're all gathered to their fathers or gathered to their people or something like that. Or think of all the kings whether good or bad at the end of pretty much every account in one and two kings we read something like at the end of his reign such and such slept with his fathers and was buried.

David, Solomon, Asa the good kings Omri and Ahab the bad kings at the end of their lives they all go to Sheol to sleep with their fathers. And Sheol is often described as a sort of dark sleepy place.

So in Job chapter 3 for instance Job asks Why did I not die at birth come out from the womb and expire?

Why did the knees receive me or why the breasts that I should nurse? For then I would have laid down and been quiet I would have slept then I would have been at rest with kings and counsellors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves or with princes who had gold who filled their houses with silver.

[19 : 19] Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child as infants who never see the light? There the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest.

There the prisoners are at ease together they hear not the voice of the taskmaster the small and the great are there and the slave is free from his master. See Job sees Sheol as a place of rest a place to lie down and sleep and not be troubled anymore a place where he will be with other people.

In other words Sheol is not a particularly exciting place for Job or for the people of the Old Testament in general. This is not the Pauline hope where death is gain or anything like that.

In fact the only reason Job is so keen to go there is because his life has become so awful that even Sheol would be an improvement but it's not an entirely terrifying place for Job either is it?

It's a place of rest and it's clear in the Old Testament that the people of Sheol can be disturbed from their rest and they don't want to be. Right? So in 1 Samuel chapter 28 for instance remember when Saul goes to consult the witch at Endor or the medium and he reads you the account again.

[20 : 34] So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went he and two men with him and they came to the woman by night and he said divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.

Notice the language of bring up. The woman said to him surely you know what Saul has done how he has cut off the mediums and necromancers from the land why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?

But Saul swore to her by the Lord as the Lord lives no punishment shall come upon you for this thing. Then the woman said whom shall I bring up for you? He said bring up Samuel for me.

When the woman saw Samuel she cried out with a loud voice and the woman said to Saul why have you deceived me? You are Saul the king said to her do not be afraid what do you see? And the woman said to Saul I see a God coming up out of the earth.

Now hear the word for a God by the way the word for a God is often used in fact it basically means it's a term for a disembodied being or spirit of various different kinds but a spiritual being that is from the spiritual realm.

[21 : 44] Right? So this is Samuel's spirit this is Samuel now a God right? A disembodied spirit coming up out of Sheol he said to her what is his appearance and she said an old man is coming up and he is wrapped in a robe and Saul knew that it was Samuel and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage and Samuel said to Saul and notice the author just says Samuel said to Saul why have you disturbed me by bringing me up right?

Now this is a weird moment for us isn't it? But again there is no suggestion in the text that it didn't really happen or that there's some trick happening here no it's quite clear that this really is Samuel coming up from Sheol having been summoned reluctantly by the medium Samuel talks about being disturbed as if he was at rest because he was there's another great description of Sheol in the book of Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 14 I just sort of want to marshal the data if you know what I mean and show you all the places this one is kind of like it's like one of those old period dramas or in Cinderella when people are announced as they enter a ballroom Isaiah 14 is a bit like that except the king of Babylon is entering Sheol and as he does so all of the kings of the other nations are down there because he killed them and so first it's not a fun way to arrive anyway make friends for yourselves in eternal dwellings anyway

Luke 16 okay so first Isaiah describes the scenes on earth how excited everyone on earth is because the king of Babylon has finally gone down to Sheol then Isaiah takes us underground and he says Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come it rouses the shades to greet you all who were leaders of the earth it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations all of them will answer and say to you you too have become as weak as we you have become like us your pomp is brought down to Sheol the sound of your harps maggots are laid as a bed beneath you and worms are your covers welcome how you are fallen from heaven oh day star sun of dawn how you are cut down to the ground you who laid the nations low you said in your heart I will ascend to heaven the Babylonian tower builders I will ascend to heaven above the stars of

God I will set my throne on high I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north I will ascend above the heights of the clouds I will make myself like the most high but you are brought down to Sheol to the far reaches of the pit the pit is a very common synonym for Sheol so Sheol is where the shades live we would call them ghosts although of course they exist they don't live and the two things are never confused by the way which obviously will be important when we talk about hell eventually death doesn't mean the end of existence Sheol is the opposite of heaven so if heaven is up then Sheol is down Sheol is a place of humiliation and weakness at least for the king of Babylon where you have to sleep with worms and maggots and again this is all in the New Testament as well so in Luke chapter 10 for instance you remember when Jesus is pronouncing judgment upon the towns where he did most of his mighty works he says and you

Capernaum will you be exalted to heaven no you will be brought down to Hades or just a little earlier in Luke chapter 8 you remember when Jesus is discussing with the legion of unclean spirits where they will go and they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss right the abyss is the deepest darkest part of Sheol or the deepest darkest part of Hades in the Old Testament it's called the Tohom right the deep so Jesus lets them go into the pigs okay so that that's Sheol listen to how one theologian summarizes it in the Old Testament Sheol is the place of the souls of the dead both the righteous like Jacob and Genesis 37 and Samuel 1 Samuel 28 and the wicked in the New Testament the Hebrew word Sheol is translated as Hades and the description of Sheol in the Old and New Testaments bears some resemblance to the Hades of Greek mythology it is under the earth number 16 and it is like a city with gates and bars it is a land of darkness a place where shades the shadowy souls of men dwell it is the land of forgetfulness where no work is done and no wisdom exists most significantly

[26 : 35] Sheol is a place where no one praises God right so that's a really helpful summary I think in the Old Testament Sheol is presented sort of as a grey world where everybody goes and in a sense everybody is too weak and tired to really do anything and it's not like the vitality and colour of the world above it's kind of an anemic pathetic dull place where the blood has been drained out of everybody everybody's sleepy it's dark it's ugly but there are some hints in the Old Testament that although Sheol is the universal destination for everyone not everyone's experience in Sheol will be exactly the same and I mean we've already seen this a bit haven't we the difference between what Job is looking forward to and what happened to the king of Babylon right the rest versus maggots is quite the difference is quite striking let's press into that a little more for one remember there are different depths within

Sheol right so just as there are different heights above us you've got the highest heavens and the lower heavens similarly you've got the upper parts of Sheol and the really really deep parts like the abyss and likewise in the underworld there seem to be different places and spaces and territories so in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 32 Ezekiel sees Sheol divided into these different places and spaces four different nations he says in the twelfth year in the twelfth month on the fifteenth day of the month the word of the Lord came to me son of man wail over the multitude of Egypt and send them down her and the daughters of majestic nations to the world below to those who have gone down to the pit whom do you surpass in beauty go down and be laid to rest with the uncircumcised they shall fall amid those who are slain by the sword Egypt is delivered to the sword drag her away and all her multitudes the mighty chiefs shall speak of them with their helpers out of the midst of

Sheol they have come down they lie still the uncircumcised slain by the sword Assyria is there and all her company its graves all around it all of them slain fallen by the sword whose graves are set in the uttermost parts of the pit and her company is all around her grave all of them slain fallen by the sword who spread terror in the land of the living Elam is there and all her multitude around her grave all of them slain fallen by the sword who went down uncircumcised into the world below who spread their terror in the land of the living and they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit and on and on it goes listing various other nations you see how the world below reflects the world up here actually it's even more clear in the Hebrew in the original Hebrew the word for world in this chapter in the phrase the world below is the same word that gets translated land in the phrase the land of the living the point is that the land of the dead reflects the land of the living there are two worlds!

It's sort of territorial just like the world up here in fact it reflects the world up here so that the community that you belong to above seems to be the community that you join below those who die in Egypt of course are buried under Egypt but also they join the community of Egyptians they lie down with the uncircumcised and likewise the Assyrians lie with the Assyrians in one of the deepest darkest parts of the pit as you might expect because the Assyrians were like the equivalent of the Nazis in the ancient world so just like the land of the living where there are places of peace and places of fear and there are happier communities and more troubled communities what the Bible is telling us is that the land below in its own upside down sort of a way reflects that but maybe that gets you thinking the most significant geographical and social distinction in the Old

Testament was between the people of Israel and all the other nations and so what was the experience of the people of Israel the saints when they went down to Sheol and if I can put it like this I think that in fact God even provided a little slice of heaven down in Sheol for his people now that might sound crazy I know I hope some of you are thinking Josh has really gone off the deep end now you're great learning has driven you mad and it's possible I've spent a lot of time in the study let me argue my case for a moment and then if you need to just rein me in and drag me back to reality you can if you remember in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 we just briefly looked at that verse where Paul says he knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven in the very next verse Paul calls that same place paradise right he of course he does he says

[32 : 04] I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven whether in the body or out of the body I don't know God knows and I know that this man was caught up into paradise dot dot dot because the third heaven is paradise obviously now paradise is an old Persian word referring to a walled garden or a park or an orchard right it's often associated with trees mountains and rivers as soon as you hear that word where does your mind go the garden of Eden of course and that's good the garden of Eden was a paradise but you see the garden of Eden was not the first paradise the garden of Eden was really just a little outpost of the true and better paradise in heaven what I mean is the garden of Eden is not the ultimate primary paradise and just as Paul says the true paradise is in heaven and has always been in heaven but the garden of Eden was a manifestation of heaven on earth a little slice of heaven in our realm it didn't cover the whole earth of course the rest of the earth still had to be subdued but God provided for human beings this little slice of heaven and in the garden of Eden

God was even present somehow wasn't he even though he wasn't present in the way that he is totally and completely and gloriously in heaven okay but then the next step is to realize that the temple and the land of Israel were also supposed to reflect this little island of paradise in the world heaven on earth a land of rest the temple was decorated in Edenic symbolism and the land of Israel is described in Edenic terms then that brings us to the next step the land of the the land below reflects the land of the living so I think that in the Old Testament when God started to save people and forgive people and so on like Abraham he gathered them into the promised land and when those people started to die I think he provided for them a similar little outpost of paradise or the promised land down in Sheol in other words a sort of heaven in the underworld a gathering with Abraham and all their fathers remember

David says where shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence if I ascend to heaven you are there if I make my bed in Sheol you are there of course David is articulating God's omnipresence but I think he's doing more than that I think he is expressing his confidence in the fact that he will even get to enjoy God's presence in the underworld now of course it was only ever a pale shadow of the true and greater heaven above not even as good as Canaan not nearly as good as Eden but real nonetheless less now again you might think I'm crazy until a week ago I think I would have agreed with you I think I would have thought this was mad so maybe it's worth saying that this is not uniquely my idea in fact in the intertestamental period the idea of two different places or compartments within Sheol is described explicitly in the book of one

Enoch you know the book that Jude quotes and Peter alludes to and so on one Enoch he has which was not written by Enoch but may reflect a tradition and so on but he has the writer of one Enoch has four compartments but only one of them is good one of them is for the saints now again one Enoch isn't scripture I'm not saying that we shouldn't base any doctrine on one Enoch but I think what he is saying does reflect the Bible's teaching that he's!

been reading and then in the New Testament most famously Jesus articulates something like this in Luke chapter 16 so come with me to Luke chapter 16 I haven't put this one up on the screen because I want us to just look at the whole passage together Luke chapter 16 Roy's going to go into this in more detail tomorrow but I just want to draw out a couple of things in Luke chapter 16 Jesus tells a parable although interestingly it's never actually called a parable so some people think he is just describing a real scenario a real story about the fate of two people that he knows about okay but anyway personally I don't think that I think it's a parable but I do think it's a parable kind of like the parable of the good Samaritan you know it's a fictional story but set in the real world you know moreover even the dogs came and licked his sores the poor man died and was carried by the angels to

[37 : 39] Abraham's side the rich man also died and was buried and in Hades being in torment he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side and he called out father Abraham have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am in anguish in this flame but Abraham said child remember that you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner bad things but now he is comforted here and you are in anguish and besides all this between us and you a great chasm has been fixed in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able and none may cross from there to us and he said then I beg you father to send him to my father's house for I have five brothers so that he may warn them lest they also come into this place of torment but Abraham said they have Moses and the prophets let them hear them he said no father Abraham but if someone!

they will repent he said to him if they do not hear Moses and the prophets neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead okay so Roy's going to give us a lot more detail tomorrow I just want to mention a couple of things notice number one that Jesus is talking about the underworld here or the afterlife he's not talking about the situation after the judgment day okay or what we would typically call hell he's not talking about the eternal fate of the wicked we'll come to that eventually of course but here Jesus is talking about the present or the present from his perspective the rich man's brothers are still alive and they still have a chance to repent so Jesus is talking about two compartments in Sheol if I can put it like that and the two very different experiences of people in Sheol there was the poor man who was carried by the angels to

Abraham's side or Abraham's bosom would be the old translation if you're not too immature now we don't get much clarity on the state of the poor man notice he doesn't speak you know it's not a glorious picture exactly maybe he's too tired etc you know I don't want to overstate it although basically this is the picture of a!

banquet! right you remember in Jesus' day at banquets the people would recline they would lie down together as they ate together well Jesus' description of the afterlife for the godly is that they go to lie down with Abraham or you know on Abraham's bosom at a banquet resting with their fathers on the other hand the wicked like the rich man suffer a very different fate in the underworld they got to eat you know while they were in the land of the living and now they're kind of starving in the land of the dead he describes it as a place of torment fiery torment divided off from the community of the righteous by a great chasm now of course this is more detail and more clarity than anything the Old Testament ever says about the underworld this is progressive revelation I don't think the Old Testament saints knew exactly what was in store for them but I think as progressive revelation unfolds that this is the climax we have been leading towards we've been building to a sort of promised land in the underworld a little slice of

Eden or heaven in the underworld the community of saints in the underworld a great banquet with Abraham in the underworld okay so before we wrap up then let me just return to where we began the weird stuff I'm guessing that some of the things I have put to you this morning might sound a little bit weird I don't know if you've heard them before maybe some things and not others and I know that it's hard to process new ideas it's been extremely hard for me so I can sympathize and I want to offer you a quick warning and an encouragement basically the warning is about the way we use language I have done my best in this talk I've tried as much as possible maybe failed but not to talk about biblical cosmology or the cosmology of the Bible or the cosmology of the Old Testament or the ancient

[42 : 09] Near East or this is how they saw things and that's just because I just wanted to talk to you about cosmology you see the difference because in the past I think I've been guilty of downplaying all of this stuff with language like that basically so I can just keep sounding normal so I want to say that this is not scientific language or maybe that it's a spatial metaphor and I'm sure there's some truth to that scientific language if it's about the sort of study of the natural world and this realm well when we're talking about things of the spiritual realm it's going to fall short but that doesn't mean that we're not talking about things that are literally true or real and I think that it's all too easy to use this kind of language to secretly cling on to secularism in our hearts and ignore what the Bible is really saying is real so we say that this is the biblical world view or the

Bible's presentation as a way of downplaying the reality of the thing but actually what the Bible is telling us is that this is literally the world that we live in a world where to borrow from one of the books on the bookstore a world where there is a world next door there is another spiritual dimension that we can't see with our physical eyes so I don't want to go too far but I think I can push as far as this okay this is as far as I think I can go we could say when it comes to Sheol that of course if we dug down deep into the earth we wouldn't find it because what's being described here is not the physical realm under the earth but I do think that if we were to dig down and then we would have our eyes open to the spiritual realm like Gehazi while we were down there then I think we would really see Sheol down there do you see what I'm saying the souls of the dead are in torment down there just as

Gehazi saw the chariots of fire that had always been here up here and Paul saw whatever he saw in heaven whether in the body or out of the body I definitely don't know because he's not even sure but somehow I think that the physical realm that we can see with our eyes is connected whatever that means but is connected and interacts with the spiritual realm this is something that all of our forebears would have accepted readily and I think that we look down on them in our chronological snobbery at our peril because in fact I think the enlightenment typically has blinded us to these things so that we have made great advancements in science and technology and lots of other things but we have become ignorant to the spiritual realm which is actually more important so what we need brothers and sisters is to have our eyes opened again not by some particular individual miracle exactly like

Gehazi but by reading what the scriptures teach us and putting our faith in the scriptures trusting the scriptures so that then we can come to know about the spiritual dimension that exists alongside our own so I'll leave you with that let's pray Almighty God help us with these things help us to be faithful to your word to be free us from the lies of Satan and especially the lies of secular secularism atheism that keeps trying to blind us to the reality of these things help us not just to believe in the spiritual realm in theory or into your reign above us in theory but to base our whole lives on the reality of these things that are eternal and substantial rather than the vaporous world that we live in that is passing away we ask all these things in Jesus name

Amen Amen