

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of May 26, 2019

**THEME: "Honor Our Departed"
BETTER COUNTRY**

Sunday Read Hebrews 11:8-16

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." This passage of Scriptures gives us a good example of a man, Abraham, who truly lived his life with an eternal perspective. Yes, he had an exciting life on earth with instances of amazing Divine intervention; but the thing that made it so dramatic was that he, for the most part, clearly allowed God to lead his life. The fact that his heart was to do the will of God meant that he would yield to God when his own human instincts would lead him astray. Abraham was a man who understood that life on earth is really a journey to an eternal destination. For him, and for all who are followers of God living in accordance with His Word and capitalizing on His covenant; it is a journey to a *"better country."* That better country is a home in heaven. By seeking God's guidance, Abraham was compelled to leave his home country for what was to him an unknown place, causing him simply to follow as God led. God had promised that He wanted to use Abraham to form a new nation through which He would eventually provide a rich blessing to all who would bless him. That is the promise recorded in Genesis 12:1-3: *"Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee...and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee."* Jesus was born into that nation: Israel. The better country of which God is speaking is heaven, and the way to heaven is Jesus!

DESTINATION

Monday Read Psalm 23:1-6

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The final thought in what is probably the most well known passage in the Bible, the psalmist spoke of his earthly journey and final destination. Notice that his faith was more than having the assurance of an eternal home in heaven, although that alone would be a wonderful thing; he spoke of *"all the days of his life."* A real plus for asking Jesus to be our personal Savior and becoming one of His followers is to have a secure destination at the end of our earthly journey; but the Christian life is to have a God-consciousness every day of our lives. The daily life is a step toward heaven and is moving in the proper direction toward that final destination. How about those who never enter into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus? What is their destination? The Bible and only the Bible is the authority on that! The Bible teaches that Jesus came to earth from heaven. The Bible teaches in John 1:1-2 that Jesus was involved in the creation described in Genesis 1. He came to earth to be the Savior so people could have the hope of eternal life in heaven. The destination of those who reject Christ is the hell that God prepared for the devil. There are many who think that all people go to heaven; but that is not what God says. As a matter of fact, Jesus made that very clear in John 14:6, where He says this about Himself: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but by me."* He very clearly says this about those who have failed to accept Him as Savior in Matthew 25:41: *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."* Have you ever asked Jesus to be your Savior?

DEPARTURE

Tuesday Read II Timothy 4:6-8

"For I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and the time of my departure is at hand." Paul's description of death is a departure, the word that commonly appears in airports along with the word arrival in describing flights. The times posted are for leaving that location and the anticipated arrival at another location: a departure and an arrival. In many instances, it is the information for a passenger who is leaving a location from which he has been working and heading home. In His Word, God describes the Christian's life in a similar fashion: leaving earth where he has served as an ambassador for the kingdom of heaven to head to his eternal home. The Lord Jesus, in Matthew 7:13-14, spoke of life as a journey with a destination: *"Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it."* The Christian life is depicted as a straight and narrow way with life as a forever destination. Jesus describes

the life of the non-Christian as living on a crowded broad road with destruction as the final destination. He mentions in John 10:10 that life on the narrow way is the *"life abundant"* in that the Christian life is one that is focused on the eternal work of Almighty God and not taken in by the pursuit of only temporal things that are distractions of the devil. All people eventually depart earth and head to their eternal destination. What is your destination? Christ is the way to heaven!

DIVINE ESCORT

WednesdayRead Luke 16:19-26

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom..." In this teaching, Jesus describes what happens when a person dies. He compares the death of a believer with that of an unbeliever. The unbeliever, whose body was buried, went to place called hades, a place of torment, from which he cried for mercy because of the intense suffering. The beggar, a believer, upon his death was taken by angels into paradise, the same place that Jesus mentioned to the criminal on the cross at Calvary upon his confession of faith recorded in Luke 23:43: *"Today thou shalt be with me in paradise."* It is interesting to see what the Bible says about the moments after the believing poor man died. He was carried by angels; he had a divine escort to his destination after the death of his body. He did not cease to exist; he went to another place, and God provided angels to be his chauffeurs to get him there. His death was before the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Ever since the resurrection of our Savior, the souls of believers are carried directly home to heaven, the truth mentioned in II Corinthians 5:6-8: *"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."* Angels from heaven take believers to heaven.

CONQUERING DEATH

Thursday Read I Corinthians 15:54-58

"Death is swallowed up in victory...Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." No wonder that the death of a believer is referenced as a victory! It is arriving home! The battle of life on earth against the most formidable of all enemies is over. The work God had called the believer to do was completed. The mission for which that person had lived has been accomplished! Yes, there is sorrow over the death of a believer because loved ones will miss the one who is leaving. Jesus knows of that sorrow of one close to Him dying. As a matter of fact, we read this in John 11:35 where Jesus was at the tomb of a beloved friend: *"Jesus wept."* The sorrow is because of the departure of a person; but the victory is that we know the loved one is in a better place, and is enjoying the sinless bliss of heaven. The loved one is in the presence of God and all the saints who had gone before. And there is the blessed hope of the reunion that is coming! The death of a believer is a victorious entry into heaven!

DIVINE WELCOME

Friday Read Acts 7:54-60

"I see Christ standing on the right hand of God." This passage of God's Word is another detailed picture of the death of a believer, giving us an idea of what it is like when a believer dies. Stephen was a man of God who was proclaiming the gospel of Christ to an antagonistic crowd who became angered by the truth he was presenting. He was expounding on the fact that Jesus fulfilled the law and prophets about which most of his listeners thought themselves to be experts. Many in that crowd were among the ones that had called for the crucifixion of Jesus and had concocted the lies after the resurrection. Their reaction to Stephen's preaching was to stone him to death. It was while suffering a painful death that Stephen spoke up and revealed that he looked up and saw Jesus standing in heaven, not sitting at the right hand of God as mentioned in various places in the Bible, but standing. Why standing? Well, He was welcoming one of His followers into His Father's house. Remember what He said in John 14:3: *"I will receive you into my Father's house."* What an amazing royal welcome home! The Lord Jesus Himself saying *"Come in."*

FINAL HOME

Saturday Read Hebrews 12:22-23

"Ye are come to mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an unnumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Here God's universal is based. Those who by faith have received Christ are the beneficiaries of this New

Covenant, the gist of which is the promise of eternal life to those who have received Christ on the merits of His shed blood for their sins. Those who receive Christ instantly become citizens of God's holy nation, the heavenly kingdom, the new Jerusalem, their eternal home. A whole new life begins in the eternal city when a believer dies! What do people experience in heaven while they are awaiting the completion of the Church and the appearing of Christ in the air when the earthly bodies will be resurrected? There are a few details in the Bible about current activities in heaven, but the one that maybe I like most is the one in which we are involved; that being, soul winning. Remember what we are told in Luke 15:7: "*Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner who repents.*" Are our departed loved ones advised of souls whom God uses us to witness? If the angels are rejoicing, are the loved one of the new believer also advised?