

LANDMARKS AND LANDMINES-PT3 (What death is like)

This morning we're going to study yet another landmine that's closely associated with the first two we uncovered in parts 1 and 2 of this series of sermons.

In part 1 we studied the absolute fallacy that the soul is immortal, and in part 2 we dismantled the mistaken idea that the wicked are going to suffer in eternal flames that never go out.

And if you're listening to this CD without having listened to parts 1 and 2, please write, or email, or call from the information on the CD label you're listening to, and I will be glad **to send them out to you** free of charge.

The first two parts to this sermon series and the one you're about to listen to are **critical** to a proper understanding of the character of a loving God that doesn't want you to be deceived. And you know; it's amazing to me that nearly all of Christianity has been led down a very narrow pathway that's littered with landmines regarding this subject. And it's nearly impossible to keep from stepping on them because there's hardly a church anywhere you can attend today that can guide you safely through this explosive mine field without getting blown up.

This morning we're going to allow God's word to very carefully brush the dirt off these landmines so we can disarm them, remove them, and then present the Biblical landmarks that will lead us to a clear understanding of what death is like.

But before we open God's word this morning, let's pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher, and then we'll listen to a prerecorded message I did at an earlier date dealing with this very important subject.

[PRAYER]

This morning we're going to talk about what happens when you die – Heaven, Hell, or Nothing. There are a lot of people today who think nothing is going to happen after they're dead. They live this life and when they're dead, they're dead. And that's all there is.

I can remember very clearly when I was twelve years old my father was murdered in a bar – got in a fight with another fellow over a woman and he was cut up pretty bad and stabbed and after his opponent fled he made his way upstairs to the room where he was staying up above this bar, and he laid down on his bed and essentially bled to death. And I can remember as a child standing in the funeral home and looking at him laying in the casket and thinking to myself, Is this all there is? Where is my dad? Is he in heaven, hell or is he nowhere? Is this life all there is? Because I was not raised in a Christian home I had no one to talk to because I knew that if I asked my parents or some of my relatives they wouldn't be able to give me an answer because they didn't have on. And they didn't know themselves what happens to somebody when they die.

Well, when I was about twenty years old then, I left my hometown – a friend and I – hopped in my 1966 midnight blue Chevelle with a convertible top, positraction, 4-speed and all that stuff, and we headed to the "promised land" – California; at least I thought that was the promised land at the time. And actually as it turned out it was the Promised Land for me because that's where I met Christ.

But before that happened, as my friend and I went to California, we both were able land a job at a gas station. I pumped gas and he drove the tow truck. He was a little older than I. He had some experience in doing that and so he got what I thought was the better job. And one day he was on his way

to an accident and he was going a little too fast around one of the corners and he rolled the tow truck and crushed himself.

And so here I am again, standing in a funeral home looking at my best friend laying in a casket and thinking to myself, Where is Rich? Is he in heaven? Is he in hell? Or is this life all there is?

A couple years later through a series of circumstances I began to study the Bible and I found the answer to this question that troubled me for so many years and it's the answer to that question that I'm going to share with you this morning.

As you study the Bible you find that the resurrection of Christ was the key event that proved that He was who He said He was—the Son of God, the long-looked-for Messiah. And you'll also find that His sacrifice had been accepted by His Heavenly Father. And it was actually His resurrection that proved that He gained the victory over death.

In **Revelation 1:18** Jesus said, "I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death."

Now that says to me that if we want to know about hell and death, then we'd better consult the Bible and we better get to know Jesus because He's the One that has the keys to hell and death.

When the religious leaders of Jesus' day asked for a sign to prove that He was the Son of God, the only sign He gave was His resurrection. In **John 2:18-21** it says, "So the Jews answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show us, since you do these things?'" And it's interesting for us to know what "these things" are. The context of these verses is just after Jesus cleansed the temple. He went in there and he overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and He chased out all the hypocrites and He said something. Do you remember what He said? He said, "My house shall be call a house of prayer for all people, but you've made it a den of thieves." And so they all ran with their tail between their legs. And so they said, "'What sign do you show us, since You do these things?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'" Now remember, He was standing in the temple when He said that. "Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body."

Isn't it in 1 Corinthians 6 where it says our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost? And we're to care for that body. In fact when we accept Christ as our Saviour, our body is no longer ours. It's His, isn't it? And we are to care for it as it belongs to Him.

Jesus spoke of this sign repeatedly. In fact He said that He would be killed. He said openly, I'm going to be killed and on the third day I'm going to rise from the dead. And the religious leaders took Him seriously and they went to Pilate after He was dead and they said, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." **Matt. 27:63, 64** I think those men have something to answer for in the future, don't you? To call Him a deceiver? I wouldn't want to be in their shoes.

And so Pilate sent guards to place a Roman seal on that stone that covered the tomb and so now the leaders were satisfied that nobody was going to come and steal His body. But early on Sunday morning when it was yet dark, a mighty angel descended from heaven and rolled back that stone that covered the door of that tomb and said, "Jesus, Your Father calls You." And the Saviour stepped forth victor over death and the grave.

Can you imagine what excitement there must have been among the disciples? As you read the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus was the driving force of the early Christian church, that's what it was all about. In contrast to Christians, the only hope that the Roman's had, well, they didn't have any hope really. They were pagans, they were heathen and they had no hope whatsoever after death. They just figured it was a deep, dark pit and no one would ever come out of that alive.

In the catacombs in Rome under the city, it shows the difference between the pagan's death and the death of the Christian. Notice the epithets on the tombs of the pagans who died there. Over and over again you read thing like "Good bye forever" or "Good bye for eternity." But on the tombs of the Christians you read things like "Good bye until we meet again" or "Good night until the morning" or something like that. I can remember when my first wife passed away, she was in a car accident in September of 1987, and on her headstone I had three little words inscribed—"Until Jesus comes." And that's true, isn't it? That is her grave, that is the place where she rests until Jesus comes. The Christian has hope.

Remember those words again of Jesus in **Rev. 1:18**. "I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death." And so as the apostles preached Christ to the people, they made it clear that the resurrection of Christ was so important that without it there was no future hope beyond the grave.

In **1 Cor. 15:16-18** it says, "For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." In order to understand why the apostle Paul said what he did, we need to understand what the Bible teaches about death.

When God created Adam and Eve it was never His intention that anyone would ever die. After He created mankind He took inventory of what He had made and the Bible says "it was very good." In fact, it was perfect. There was no death, no sickness, no sorrow anywhere on planet earth. In **Gen. 2:16, 17** it says, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"

The next chapter in Genesis is not so happy. The tragic story is recorded for us in Genesis chapter 3. The devil using the serpent as a medium appeared to Eve and tempted her to eat of the forbidden fruit. But when Eve explained the God had told her not to eat of that tree lest she die, the serpent said, in Gen. 3:4, "You shall not surely die." That is the very first lie recorded in the Bible about death.

Because Adam and Eve chose to believe the devil and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God was forced to separate them from the tree of life and from God Himself. In **Gen. 3:22, 23** God said, "the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken." And so death came upon all mankind because he was separated from God and the tree of life.

Then God said in Gen. 3:19 "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Right here is the key to the understanding of what death is all about. The Bible says that man would return to the dust from which he was taken.

Notice how Adam was created by God in the beginning, **Gen. 2:7** – "And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being." And so God took the elements of the earth and made a body for Adam. But at this point he was nothing more than a corpse. It took something else to make a living soul. Notice the words again in Gen. 2:7

“And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath of life** and man became a living being.”

Consider the equation like this **BODY + BREATH = A LIVING SOUL**. Or in death we might write **LIVING PERSON MINUS BREATH EQUAL A CORPSE**. That’s exactly what Solomon says in **Ecclesiastes 12:7** – “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit (breath)” and by the way, when you read the word “spirit” and “breath” in the Bible, almost every time it’s the very same word in the Hebrew. The Bible translators just decided which one they were going to use in different places, but “spirit” and “breath” are the same thing. “And the spirit (breath) will return to God who gave it.”

This is essentially the same thing that Job said about death in **Job 27:3, 4**. He said, “As long as my breath is in me, and the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness.”

In **Psalm 146:3, 4** David says, “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man (or in any human being), in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.” Did you notice that King David introduces something different here? He says that when the breath leaves the body and returns to the earth, the conscious part of man (or his thoughts) perish.

In **Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6** (text background on screen described) and you’ll noticed the picture behind here, they’re having a séance. You know what the Bible says about trying to contact the dead? In the Old Testament they called it familiar spirits. What happened to people who tried to do that? They were stoned, they were put to death. And so there was a reason why God said don’t try to contact the dead, because of the dead know nothing as we’re going to read here in a minute, then who is it that’s going to appear to us? A demon impersonating our dead loved one or whatever and that demon is not going to tell you the things that God would want you to do. “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished.” And so the Bible says he knows nothing.

In **Psalm 115:17**, David again says, “The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence.”

Job 14:10 “But man dies and is laid away; indeed his breaths his last and where is he?” **Vs. 12** “So man lies down and does not rise, till the heavens are no more.” Now when are the heavens going to be no more? If we read **2 Peter 3:10** he says “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise.”

So Job understood that he was going to stay in the grave until the heavens are no more and that would be at the second coming of Christ. (**Job 14:12** continues) “They will not awake nor be roused from their sleep. Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past,”

Now when is the wrath of God, or what is the wrath of God? **Rev. 15:1 and 16:1** says the wrath of God are the seven last plagues. And the seven last plagues are poured out just before Jesus returns. And so, again, Job understood that he was going to stay in the grave until Jesus returned. (**Job 14:13** continues) “That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!”

And so the Bible teaches that when a man dies, he lies down in the grave and does not rise until the resurrection day. In **Job. 14:14**, continuing on it says, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” That was my question as I looked at my loved ones laying in the casket; shall a man live again? “All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes.” The word “change” is an important word and we’re going to see that as we continue a little bit later. **Vs. 15** “You shall call, and I will answer You.”

You'll notice that Job used the term sleep when talking about death. That's something that other Bible writers do also.

In **Psalm 13:3** David says, "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."

Also **Daniel 12:2**, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

One of the most comforting truths in God's word is that when a person dies he or she rests quietly undisturbed by the problems of life until the call of the Life Giver. That's why the Bible likens death to a sleep.

The prophet Nathan told King David what would happen he would die. In **2 Samuel 7:12** it says, "And when your days be fulfilled you shall sleep with your fathers."

Fifty-eight times the Bible refers to death as a sleep. Now that's significant. There's a reason why the word "sleep" is used to represent death. When you go to sleep at night and you sleep soundly you don't have any recollection of the passing of time, you don't know anything that's going on around you until you awaken the next morning. And isn't that a beautiful thought when you think about the death of your loved ones? They know nothing until the resurrection morning.

And so the Bible uses the word "sleep" to represent death over and over again. And even Jesus used the word "sleep" to represent death. He used that word to describe the death of one of dearest friends.

There was a home in Bethany that Jesus visited often, the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. One day when Jesus and His disciples were by the Jordan they received an urgent message that Lazarus had become very ill. And Jesus purposely stayed away for two more days. In **John 11:11** He said to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that may wake him up." Then His "disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.' However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking a rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.'"

And so they went on their way to Bethany where the family lived and as they approached the city Martha came running out to meet them weeping. And in **John 11:21** "Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'" And no doubt she was right, because she would have been in the presence of the One who is Life. **Vs. 23**, "Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Now notice very carefully these next words (**vs. 24**), "Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'"

Now Jesus, like I said, often visited the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus and I am absolutely certain that they had some spiritual conversations. And I'm sure that they must have talked about what happens to people when they die. And Martha knew exactly what happens. She said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha assured Jesus that she expected Lazarus resurrected at the end of the world. However, Jesus was about to give a sneak preview of that event.

In **John 11:25**, talking to Martha, He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he die, he shall live." And then a little later down in the chapter it says that Jesus wept. He wasn't weeping for his friend Lazarus, because He knew that in a little while He was going to bring him back to life. No, He was weeping for the grief the family and the friends were experiencing and for all those through all ages who would lose loved ones. That's why Jesus was crying.

Jesus asked that the stone that sealed the tomb be rolled away. And in **John 11:39** Martha said, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.” Nevertheless the stone was rolled away and Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” And as Lazarus struggled to walk because of those grave clothes, Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go.” What a day that must have been for Mary, Martha and all those friends that were there sorrowing over his death.

But you know friends, that was only a small preview of the glory and the excitement that will happen when Jesus comes again and all the graves of those who have accepted Him as their Saviour are opened and they rise to meet the Lord in the air.

1 Thess. 4:13, Paul said, “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” **Vs. 16** “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an arch-angel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

In 1 Corinthians Paul describes in detail this event that will occur when Jesus comes. In 1 Cor. 15:51 he says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—” Remember that word? I told you to remember? Remember what Job said? He said, I’m going to wait in the grave until my change comes.” And here we see that we’re going to be changed when Jesus comes and raises the righteous dead. **Vs. 52** “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we (the living) shall be changed. So when the corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality,”

And don’t let anybody ever tell you that we have immortal souls. Because the Bible tells us that immortality will be given to the righteous when Jesus comes and raises the dead and changes those who are living.

Vs 54 continues – “then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

Jesus also told the disciples that all, including the wicked, will be raised from the dead. **John 5:28** “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming (notice it’s in the future) in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Think this through with me for a minute. If people went to heaven or hell at death, why would there be any need for a resurrection of either the righteous or the unrighteous? And why would Jesus make the statement that He did just before He comes in **Rev. 22:12**? He says, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

And so, very clearly here, all the rewards—good or bad—will be given when Jesus returns.

Here’s another one in **John 14:1-3**. Jesus said to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

If a person goes to heaven when they die, if a righteous person goes to heaven when they die, Christ has already received them, hasn’t He? And they are already where Jesus is. But no, that’s not the way the Bible teaches. Jesus went away to prepare a place for us and He’s coming back and THEN He will receive us and THEN we will be where He is. Really it seems so plain as you read the Bible. When people die they sleep in the grave and rest from their labors and troubles until Jesus comes. Then He will

resurrect all those who have accepted His sacrifice in their behalf. At that time Jesus will also come to welcome the living saints who have not died.

Continuing on with **1 Thess. 4:17, 18**, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

I’m really thankful that the Thessalonians didn’t understand the state of the dead because we wouldn’t have this explanation that Paul gave of such a comforting doctrine.

But what about the thief on the cross? Didn’t Jesus promise him that he would be in heaven with Him the day that he died? The gospels tell us that first both of the thieves taunted Jesus and said that “if you really have the power, save yourself and save us also.” But afterward one of the thieves became repentant and cried out for salvation. In **Luke 23:42** it says, “Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’” Even the thief on the cross understood that God would remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom. Did Jesus come into His kingdom that day? Absolutely not! **Vs. 43** “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

Well, that sounds pretty much like the thief was going to be in paradise or in heaven with Jesus that day, doesn’t it? Did Jesus mean that that very day the thief would be in paradise? Or did he promise that day, that He and the thief would be in paradise when He comes to set up His kingdom on earth? First of all we need to understand that there were no punctuation marks in the Greek Bible, no commas, no periods, no paragraphs—nothing. It wasn’t until several centuries later that punctuation was added to the Bible.

Watch what happens to the meaning of this text when we move just one comma. Here we’ll read it once again as it appears in the Bible. “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you (comma), today you will be with Me in Paradise.’” And let’s see what happens when you move just one comma. “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you today (comma), you will be with Me in Paradise.’” Big difference isn’t there.

And so what we need to do is take a look at the internal evidence given in the Bible as to what happened during the next few hours. First of all, did Jesus go to paradise that day? No, He didn’t. The Bible tells us that He died on that day, Friday, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. Then on Sunday morning He appeared to Mary and she wanted to worship Him, but the Bible says that He restrained her. Why did He restrain her? Because of what it says in **John 20:17** “Jesus said to her, ‘. . . I have not yet ascended to My Father;’ ”

And so, Jesus would not accept the homage and worship of Mary until He went back to heaven and heard from His Father’s own lips that His sacrifice was accepted. And so Jesus couldn’t have been in paradise on Friday. Even as late as Sunday He hadn’t returned to heaven yet. And so if Jesus did not go to paradise that day, the thief did not go to paradise that day. It’s just that simple.

In **James 2:26** he gives an interesting analogy. “For as the body without the spirit (or without the breath) is dead, (and if you look up that word “dead” in the concordance, it says corpse) so faith without works is dead also.” Just as genuine faith does not exist when works are absent, so life is non-existent when there is no breath in the body. Never forget it.

The idea that there is life apart from the body, or that the soul is immortal, is a development the originated in the Garden of Eden as Satan lied to Eve when he said in **Gen. 3:4** “Ye shall not surely die.” That’s why it’s very important that we understand why the resurrection of the body is so important. It always takes the physical body and the breath of God to make a living soul. It’s really no more complicated than that.

God wants us to understand so that we won't be fooled by the various manifestations of spiritualism that Satan will use in these last days.

And so in conclusion, let me say this. Jesus paid the price for our redemption and for our restoration. The greatest gift that God can give is eternal life, which means victory over death. All other gifts are meaningless without it. And the wonderful truth is, it is ours for the taking. Your decision to accept Jesus and follow Him is the greatest decision you will ever make in this life. And what is our cost? Our cost is a surrendered heart. Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? What has Christ given for me? The Son of God gave ALL—life and love and suffering for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from Him?

But what do we give up when we give up all? A sin-polluted heart for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. Anybody here want to hold onto a sin-polluted heart? I don't think I want to hold on to it. And yet men think it hard to give up all. Eternal life can be yours if you are willing to surrender all to Jesus. He cannot accept anything less.

In [Matthew 13:44](#) He said, “. . . the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Friends, Jesus is the pearl of great price, and we are the merchant. To sell all that we have and buy that pearl is to give ourselves completely and unreservedly to Jesus and to His cause. It's to die to self and to live for Him. Let's make Jesus first and last and best in everything. What do you say?

Well dear friends, I hope you've benefited from today's message, and before we close with prayer I'd like to add a few more thoughts for you to consider. There are 9 separate instances recorded in the Bible where various individuals were raised from the dead, and afterward to die once again at a later time, and I'd like for us to think about these 9 people for a minute.

In John 11 we have the story of one of these people, and his name was Lazarus. You'll remember that Lazarus died, and it wasn't until four days had past that Jesus arrived at his tomb. And when the Lord said, “Lazarus come forth”, the one whose flesh had already begun to rot, came back to life and carried on with life once again.

And perhaps you haven't thought of this before, but don't you think it's a little strange that Lazarus had nothing to say about his heavenly vacation of 4 days? Not one word! He didn't say, Oh Jesus, why did you bring me back here? I was having such a good time in paradise. But no – the scriptures are silent, because no such thing ever took place.

In fact, regarding the other eight instances in the Bible where people were raised from the dead, they didn't anything to say about their experience either. Don't you find **that** a little odd, if there is consciousness after death?

- There was also Jairus' daughter in [Luke 8](#) and she had nothing to say.
- There was the son of the widow of Nain in [Luke 7](#) and he had nothing to say.

- There was Eutychus in **Acts 20** who fell out of an open window and died, and he had nothing to say when he came back to life.
- There was the son of the Shunamite woman in **2 Kings 4** who had nothing to say.
- There was the son of the widow of Zarephath in **1 Kings 17** and he had nothing to say.
- And finally there was the dead man who was thrown on top of the bones of Elisha in **2 Kings 13**, and when he came back to life he had absolutely nothing at all to say.

Not one of these people had any stories to tell about what it was like in heaven. And besides wouldn't it have been a dirty trick to bring them back to this sin-cursed earth to live once again after they had experienced the bliss of heaven?

As we have already seen, the Scriptures make it clear that God's plan for life after death comes only through the resurrection "at the last day," just like Mary said to Jesus when her brother died, and just like the thief on the cross understood. And any teaching that is contrary to this landmark of truth is an error that Satan can use to deceive and ensnare his victims. Please don't be one of them: because friends, the devil has a landmine prepared to blow up every one of God's landmarks of truth.

This landmine of the devil that teaches contrary to the Bible about the state of the dead, just like many other errors, is another one of those false doctrines that the Church of Rome borrowed from paganism and incorporated into the Christian religion in the first few centuries after Christ ascended to heaven.

In fact, most Lutherans don't realize this, but the great reformer Martin Luther classed this landmine with the "monstrous fables that form part of the Roman dunghill of decretals." Commenting on the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, that the dead know not anything, Luther says this: "Solomon judges that the dead are asleep, and feel nothing at all. For the dead lie there, accounting neither days nor years, but when they are awakened, they shall seem to have slept scarce one minute." *The Problem of Immortality*, E. Petavel, page 255

Also the great Reformer and martyr William Tyndale, referring to the state of the dead, declared: "I confess openly, that I am **not** persuaded that they (the dead) be already in the full glory that Christ is in, or the elect angels of God are in. Neither is it any article of my faith; for if it were so, I see not but then the preaching of the resurrection of the flesh were a thing in vain." *British Reformers—Tindal, Frith, Barnes*, page 349

According to this popular landmine, the redeemed in heaven are supposed to be acquainted with all that takes place on the earth, and especially with the lives of friends and family they left behind. But how could it be a source of happiness for those who have died to know the troubles of the living here on earth? Or to see them enduring all the sorrows, disappointments, and anguish of life? And how utterly revolting is the belief that as soon as the breath leaves the body, the souls of the unrepentant are consigned to the flames of hell! To what depths of anguish must those be plunged who see their loved ones passing to the grave unprepared, only to enter upon an eternity of woe and sin!

Friends, Christ represents death as a sleep. To His believing children, their life is hid with Christ in God, and until the last trump shall sound, those who die will sleep in Him. That's what the Bible teaches. And isn't this landmark of truth much simpler and comforting to know and understand?

This is what our loving God declares to all who have faith in Him and in His word, and I hope this information has been a real blessing to you this morning. Please pass it on as the Lord gives you have opportunity to share this landmark with others who have a desire to know the truth.