

Imagine that nothing exists. It's hard to do, isn't it? Any words we use when we try to describe "nothing" end up sounding a bit like the definition of "Eternity". Eternity is "the absence of time and space". This is the sphere in which God exists. With Him, "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Peter 3:8). He is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). He is "before all time and now and forever" (Jude 1:25). He is "the high and exalted One who inhabits eternity" (Isaiah 57:15).

All of us exist today in a brief parentheses of eternity. Our familiar cosmos is a dimension of time and space, imagined by God, to serve as a suitable environment for mortal creatures. We enter this "Kingdom of Nature" by the process of a physical Birth; and we shall depart from it through the avenue of Death (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Infants born into the "Kingdom of Nature" are incapable of sin because they cannot understand the concept of right and wrong (Romans 7:9). Furthermore, infants are not held eternally responsible for the sins of anyone else (Ezekiel 18:20), although the sins of others may cause them physical distress. Into the "Kingdom of Nature" we all have come, and we grow from infancy to an age of accountability.

Within the "Kingdom of Nature", two spiritual forces are vying for our souls. These two entities are represented by the "Kingdoms" over which they reign. One is described in the Bible as "The Domain of Darkness". Satan rules here. The other is called "The Kingdom of Christ". Mortal souls enter "The Domain of Darkness" through the portal of "Sin". "When **lust** has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth **death**" (James 1:15). Spiritual death is a state of separation from fellowship with God. The atoning work of Jesus made it possible for us to be delivered "from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son" (Col 1:13).

Just as there are very distinct steps which lead *downward* into "The Domain of Darkness", there are also steps which we can take *upward* into "The Kingdom of Christ". The Lord will save us from our sins if we have faith in Him (Heb 11:6), repent of our sins (Acts 17:30), confess our faith in Him (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized into Him (John 3:5). Those who refuse to comply with His terms of salvation must remain in "The Domain of Darkness". Those who are spiritually "born again" are expected to grow and mature within Christ's Kingdom. Our "Faithfulness" is demonstrated by our willingness to grow in moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (II Peter 1:5-7).

Now there are Three Kingdoms recognized by God within His cosmos. "The Kingdom of Nature" – "The Domain of Darkness" – "The Kingdom of Christ". One day, Death will take us away from this dimension of time and space. We shall leave the physical realm from one of these three "Kingdoms" and shall be in one of four distinct states:

1. From the "Kingdom of Nature", innocent infants depart this physical realm (Mt 19:14)
2. From the "Domain of Darkness", alien sinners leave this mortal world (II Thes 1:7-9)
3. From the "Kingdom of Christ", some are faithful believers when they die (Rev 2:10)
4. From the "Kingdom of Christ", unfaithful believers also expire (Mt 13:41-43)

Where does the Bible say we go after death? We've seen the Physical Realm, as God sees it. We've understood Death to be a doorway . . . but to where? New Testament writers borrow the Greek word "Hades" to describe "The Realm of the Dead" (Mt 16:18; Acts 2:27,31). Jesus described the "Hadean World" in Luke 16:19-31. He pictured a spiritual realm divided into two chambers: one is a place of comfort called "Paradise" (Lk 23:43; II Cor 12:4); the other is a place of torment called "Tartarus" (II Peter 2:4,9). "Paradise" is the realm of Hades reserved for innocent infants and faithful citizens of Christ's Kingdom. "Tartarus" is the realm of Hades reserved for unfaithful believers and alien sinners.

Hades will store the souls of all mankind until "The Resurrection". "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of

judgment” (John 5:28-29). “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:11-15) “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (II Cor 5:10).

At the “Judgment”, Christ will say to the saved: “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34); and the righteous will enter into “eternal life” (Mt 25:46). To the lost He will say, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41). With this, the door will close on “Time” . . . and we shall be swallowed up into “Eternity”.

Where will you spend “Eternity”? Will it be in “Heaven” . . . in the presence of God? Or will it be in “Gehenna” . . . a place described by Jesus as being like a rotten, detestable garbage dump? Like the garbage dump of Jerusalem, Jesus said that “Hell” will be a place of “unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-44). You still have a choice to make. Your eternal destiny is still in your hands. Don’t go to your grave as an alien sinner, having never acknowledged faith in Christ to be your savior, having never been baptized into Him. Don’t go to your grave as an unfaithful child of God, having turned your back on the one who saved you, having refused to grow in moral virtues and in favor with God and His family. If you need to repent of your sins and take some step to obey the Lord, please do so . . . before it is “eternally” too late.

From the Womb to the Tomb

ETERNITY

COSMOS

DEATH

HADES

ETERNITY

