

Life after Death

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It's estimated that over 43,000 people die in car accidents in the United States each year. Breast cancer claims over 42,000 a year and over 16,000 people die of AIDS each year. Every 34 seconds a person in the United States dies from heart disease. That means more than 2,500 Americans die from heart disease each day. Every 20 seconds, a person in the United States has a heart attack. At least 250,000 people die of heart attacks each year before they reach a hospital.

When a person has a heart attack or gets into an accident and his heart stops, this medical equipment called AED will be able to restart heart beats with its electric shock. I am sure that you all have seen it from movies or TV series. Even though it is a very impressive invention, it is completely helpless and useless when it comes to resurrecting a person's spirit.

A. MANY DIFFERENT VIEWS OF DEATH

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes.

In the oldest book of the Bible, the Book of Job, the question is asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" That is something everyone should ask in life: "What's going to happen to me when I die? What is there beyond this place called Earth?"

All of us have thought about this unpleasant subject one time or another. Many people have several different conclusions of their own.

If I may list a few, here they are:

- Some people believe that all the good people will end up in heaven, especially good 'ol Americans. They think that heaven is filled with fat baby angels floating on top of cotton clouds and playing harps and bored out of their gourd.
- Many people also have the wrong idea about hell. They think that people in hell carry coal to the blazing furnace day and night while all the demons poke at them with their pitch forks. Or they think that hell is a place to have some serious parties with all of their beer drinking buddies.
- Then there is another type of people who claim, "When you're gone, you're gone. It's all over with. Live like a pig and die like a dog." No hope at all.
- For those who are into Hinduism, Buddhism and New Age reincarnation stuff, they believe that they would come back to achieve their enlightenment in different form of life up to one hundred thousand times.

B. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE LIFE AFTER DEATH

First, let's see what the Bible says about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

*John 19:38-42 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus.
39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a*

mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

John 20:24-28 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

In Chapter 19, we find Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus carefully put the body of dead Jesus into a tomb. On the eighth day, Jesus stood in the middle of the room where the disciples hung around. Nobody opened the door for Him. In other words, His resurrected body is not limited like our bodies. He can be anywhere He wants without any limitation.

C. TWO RESURRECTIONS

1 Cor 15:20-28 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

The firstfruits were a sign of the harvest to come. And the Resurrection of Jesus was a sign of the resurrection of all believers which was to come.

Wherever the Scriptures speak about sin, they also speak about death. The two are inseparable. Adam brought sin and death into the world, but Christ brought resurrection and life. Whether we're still in Adam or in Christ, we all have eternal life. The difference is up to our destinations – Heaven or Hell.

I asked you to underline v23. Right now, the first resurrection is a process over a period of time. It began with Jesus Christ. And the first resurrection continues as each born-again believer of God dies in Christ. It will be completed when all of the martyred followers of Christ from the seven year Great Tribulation period in the future have been fulfilled and entered the heavenly realm. That will complete the first resurrection.

The second resurrection of the unrighteous dead will not take place until the end of the thousand year millennial reign of Jesus Christ. At the Great White Throne Judgment of

God in Revelation chapter 20 – as Apostle John saw the Throne of God, the Books were opened, death and hell gave up the dead one who refused to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior which were in them, and all these people stood before God and they were judged according to the things written in the Books. This is the second resurrection for those who reject Jesus. Eventually, all of them will be thrown into the Lake of Fire to receive their eternal condemnation.

D. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST - THE FOUNDATIONAL ISSUE

Because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross, and because He rose from the dead three days later, we as Christians have the hope that when we die, we will immediately go into the presence of God into a wonderful place called heaven.

That is why the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is one of the most important biblical truths there is. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, next to the crucifixion itself, is the most significant event in church history. It is not a peripheral issue. It is foundational. It is bedrock. It is the bottom line.

Let me share with you just three essential Christian truths that depend on the Resurrection:

1) Life beyond the grave depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' victory over death promises us that we too will overcome death.

2) God's future judgment of the world rests upon the Resurrection.

Acts 17:31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

This promise reminds us that one day God will bring His ultimate justice to every wrong by everyone who rejected His Son Jesus.

3) The resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Resurrection promise us that God will not only give us life beyond the grave, but He will give us power and hope to live the Christian life on earth.

The Resurrection provides power to Christianity, freedom from sin, and joy and hope to followers of Christ.

E. HOPE IN CHRIST

Jesus doesn't give us any philosophical argument about life after death. He simply declares it! He speaks of what the truth is, and tells us with the authority of heaven: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" in John 11:25.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 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 shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is

sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you have confidence in God that you will be in heaven after you die? If you do, why? Because you are a good person? Because you were born in America? If you don't have that confidence? Why not?

From what we just have read, Christ has replaced the dark door of death with the shining gate of life for all of us. Any of us can have that confidence if we put our trust in Christ, not in ourselves.

Apostle Paul, too, had that confidence. He said, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain," in Philippians 1:21. Paul's true hope was rooted in Christ, who died on the cross for sinners, who rose from the grave that first Easter morning, who was alive in heaven, and who would one day take Paul into His presence. Those who are prepared to die are most prepared to live.

F. GOD'S FORGIVENESS IS READY FOR US

Some of you may say, "You have no idea what I have done." That's right, I have no idea what you have done and I don't care to know about it. Even though God knows exactly what you've done, He is willing to forgive you and cleanse you with His righteousness through His Son Jesus' atoning sacrifice. There is not a sin that God cannot forgive except refusing to accept His invitation to forgive in Christ.

Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.

If you tend to keep blaming yourself after you've acknowledged your sins to God, think about what you're doing. You are keeping alive the memory of your sins by your anger at yourself. To overcome this, focus on the Savior, not on your sin. Think about what He has done, not what you have done. Because Jesus forgives your sin, you can "forget" your sin if you come to Jesus with a sincere heart.

G. YOUR CHOICE NOT TO BE RESURRECTED

2 Timothy 2:11-13 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

The Census Bureau of the Federal Government tells us that one person dies every 12 seconds in the United States. There are some people who choose not to be resuscitated when their hearts stop beating. Some of them carry a card or medical bracelet like this. The emergency crew will stand there and watch this person die, because that person made a choice to not be resuscitated.

Some of you may not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You just have heard the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ, what He has done for you. If you decide not to accept Him into your heart as your Savior and Lord, you are telling God that your spirit within you doesn't want to be resurrected. If you don't receive Him into your heart as your Savior and Lord, your spirit will not be saved. Just as those emergency crew would respect the dying person's wish, God will respect your dying spirit's wish and He will let you head down to hell.

You might say, "I will do that tomorrow." Did I mention that people die every 12 seconds in America? You might be the next one.

But if you choose to receive Jesus into your heart, your eternal life in heaven will be guaranteed and you will live forevermore with Jesus.

In a minute, I am going to give you an opportunity to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Please remember that you don't have to be anyone special to be a child of God. You don't have to bring any valuable thing to Him other than sincere heart to receive Him into your heart.

Repeat after me, please.

"Heavenly Father, I confess that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for my sins. By faith, I believe that Jesus died for my sins, and rose again from the dead and is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Right now, I turn away from my sins and receive Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Please come into my heart. In Jesus' name, amen."

This time, I am going to talk to some of you who once came to the Lord Jesus. But you walked away from Him, because you wanted what the world could offer with sinful pleasure. God is waiting for you to come back to Him. You have been gone so long. The loving Father in heaven is waiting for you.

For those who are coming back to God, please repeat after me:

"Heavenly Father, I confess that I walked away from you. Please forgive me for my sins. Please receive me and wash away all my sins and help me to be rooted and grounded in Your Word, so that I may never depart from You again. In Jesus' name, amen."