

Are You Ready to Die?

BY Pastor Mike Taylor



John 11: 25, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:"

Hebrews 9:27 " And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

Of all the trials of this life, when they are ended, there is nothing that gives the average man on the street more anxiety than thinking of his own death. Most don't want to think about that time. The young never think about it, as they are full of life, and to them, they are virtually immortal. Sadly, many come to the realization too soon, that life is fleeting and very fragile and must be guarded with caution

and utmost regards as to its safety. Every man and woman alive wants to put off that inevitable outcome of being alive, their death. That is the finality of death.

Men in their darkened hearts deny the existence of God. They are called atheist, as they see no need for God. They believe in themselves only, and deny a life after this one.

Psalms 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

Paul reprimanded such thinking in Romans chapter 1:20,

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

So men seeing the world and it's creation, and clearly see the wonders of an intelligent design that even many atheist have proven by science, could not have happened by chance, or by evolution as it has been proven impossible. Then there is no explanation for what we see with our own eyes, but a Supernatural Being in our universe that made the earth, heavens and all that exist in this world by One author, we call God Almighty, namely Jehovah, the God of the Bible. If we are honest with ourselves and acknowledge that we have been gloriously made, how do we discover this supernatural power that has it's beginning with the God of creation? We begin with the only written revelation of His power and His authority, and that is found in your bible. It is God's only communication with man during the times we live in that He has chosen to reveal Himself to a sinful creation that we have become. That Bible has survived 1000s of years to be revealed in the last days for one purpose, for God to reveal Himself to us, the generation of the last days of the Age of Grace.

The Bible is a collection of Holy Spirit inspired books that deals with One subject and is about One man, Jesus Christ. God's creation was stolen because of the will of man to sin against the commands of God and believe the lie of Satan, "You will become as gods" as Satan breathed his lie. But God had a plan from the very beginning, knowing all things, He put into action the plan to redeem His creation and draw men unto Himself. He knew that men could not save himself, it was impossible. There had to be a way to satisfy the requirements of pardoned sin. The True God of the Bible is Holy and without sin, and will not allow it into His presence so sin must be covered by a perfect sacrifice. Paul speaks of this requirement for forgiveness of sin in Hebrews, 9:22:

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

But it had to be a sinless offering, not an offering of sheep and bulls, but a sinless offering, which required that God come and offer Himself, as a ransom for many. He was to be our Kinsman Redeemer, born of woman, born of God, sinless and undefiled to take our place. John 3:16,

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

v.17, For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

So the greatest manifestation of eternal love laid down His life willingly for the redemption of all who believe on the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in faith to cleanse them from their sins and lead them into a new life of becoming transformed into His image, His likeness, and model the way He lived while here on earth. This is the beginning of the greatest story ever told and believed by millions of people unto salvation, but the last part of the story is even greater. On the third day, Jesus was raised to life to receive a resurrection body, and became the first fruits of those "born of the dead". Let us now turn to the chapter in the bible that some call the "resurrection chapter" found in your bible in 1st Corinthians chapter 15.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD?

Paul tackles this question head on, as many had come to believe that there was no resurrection. Paul gives one of the clearest, most concise definitions of the "gospel" found anywhere in the Bible. He shows how a denial of the resurrection of the dead is a denial of the gospel itself, and how believing in the gospel gives one hope for the next world as well as for the present.

1st Corinthians 15:12,

12 "Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

This heresy had come into the congregations in Corinth, as the pagans surrounding this church of the Greek citizenry did not believe in a physical resurrection. Paul reminds them of the many witnesses that saw the Lord Jesus in the flesh after His resurrection in that same chapter

v.3 "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

v4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

v.5, And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

v.6, After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

v. 7, After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

v. 8, And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

Paul goes onto affirm by witness accounts the bodily resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but He makes an even more astounding pronouncement in this chapter.

v. 12, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

v. 13, But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

v. 14, And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

v. 15, Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

v. 16, For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

v. 17, And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

v. 18, Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

Paul is testifying that if Jesus was not resurrected, and by extension, we will also not be resurrected, then His sacrifice meant nothing. For if Christ is not raised, we are not raised, if He be still dead, then we are dead as well. The resurrection of Jesus Christ to life, a well documented historical fact seen by hundreds of witnesses who actually touched Him, ate with Him, and listened to His Words and untold hundreds into the thousands in this near time period that went to their death with the knowledge of His resurrection and their own future resurrection to eternal life as well.

Paul goes onto explain that there is an order of those born of the dead. Jesus Christ, the first of the first fruits and the 1st resurrection at Jesus Coming for His church. 1st Corinthians 15:20-23,

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

-For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

-For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

-But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

Paul goes onto explain that we will be same as Jesus is, in the same resurrection that He experienced.

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (I Corinthians 15:38-44)

John wrote about what we can expect, when we finally see Him in our glorified bodies. 1 John 3:2,

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." This is the final fulfillment of our eternal lives that begin right then. But some say, what about the dead in Christ now? What are they and where are they?

THE DEAD IN JESUS CHRIST.

Of one aspect of the life hereafter, many interpretation have been made of what our dear departed love ones are enjoying, or not enjoying right now...All of us have seen the popular depictions of winged spirits floating on clouds playing a harp, or walking around on streets of gold, or of people alive contacting long dead relatives in a forbidden act called "necromancy". The plane of existence between spirit world and the world of flesh is a

parallel existence from what I can gather from reading our bibles. There is a war that goes on in the spirit world that is played out in a mirror image of the fleshly and material world we live in. Paul warned us of this spiritual warfare when in Ephesians he encouraged each of us who call on the name of the Lord, to take on the whole armor of God, Ephesians chapter 6:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

I read a very good analogy of this spirit world that surrounds us and is populated with the power and the prince of the air. To speak to souls departed, is most likely speaking with demons and is forbidden. The dead cannot reach us and we cannot reach them. From scripture we can learn several things and that is, people go one place or another, one is good, the other is bad. One is with God, the other is devoid of everything that is God. In the Old Testament, it was called Paradise and the souls that departed this life dying in faith believing the coming of the Messiah, found peace in the "bosom of Abraham" as noted in the lesson spoken by Jesus about the rich man and Lazarus. Some try to make this just a parable that Jesus spoke of to make a point, but Jesus used real life examples to state a spiritual truth. In this we see Lazarus who died a poor man in the bosom of Abraham comforted, and the rich man who had everything enduring torment in Sheol, called hell. Jesus mentions flames that torment and the rich man needing only a drop of water to quench his thirst. In picturesque terms a very graphic picture of lost hope. Note Lazarus is mentioned by name, but the rich man is faceless, as he could be anybody that dies in their sins and is forgotten.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 9, Solomon speaks of the grave.

v. 5, "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten."

If you speak of that material body, that is correct. That flesh turns back to dust and knows nothing...but what of the spiritual part that man is made of? v. 7 of the same chapter,

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

II Corinthians 5:8, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

So according to scripture, the body which is flesh goes to dust, but the spirit that God gave goes back to Him. In what form? That is when the bible goes silent. We are not told, but glimpses of the glory we will share. We are told of the City of God, but that is after Jesus Christ comes back and God lives with us. There are many testimonies of experiences of seeing a glimpse of the life on the other side. I have in my library, the book by Terry James, who I believe experienced glory in an all too brief encounter that he wrote about in his book, "Heaven Vision" and It will bring a sense of awe that a person can experience just a taste of what we can expect when we are with the Lord for all eternity.

I go back to the explanation that Jesus gave of those who are found in Jesus Christ, when He spoke to the thief on the cross. "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise". We cannot fully comprehend, apart from what the bible describes of the glory that will be found in us at the end of this age, to understand what transpires at the last breath we take, and the angels of God usher us, those that be found in Jesus Christ, to be with God.

Yes, I can hear the naysayers quoting scripture, and I am aware of those as well. Jesus made mention of that, John, 3:13, "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man."

But does that limit God? Who are we to say what God does with the spirit that belongs to Him?

Ephesian 4

v. 8, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

v.9, (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

v. 10, He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

If manifestations were mentioned in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, would it not make sense that when Jesus rose from the dead, that He released captives who were captive and brought them with Him? Brought them where? Scripture does not say definitively, but we are left wondering about life after death. For one thing we know for sure, life does not end with physical death. But let us make an assumption, just for the sake of argument for your naysayers of the concept of the resurrection of the dead, and life after death....

BELIEF VS. UNBELIEF IN GOD (two examples)

Scenario one....."Billy" is an atheist and has lived like the devil for most of his natural life. He relies on no one, but Billy proclaims no god but the god of his flesh, which he satisfies in any ungodly manner he can think of....when he dies, he is like the cock roach, or the animal who dies in the wilderness. He goes to nothing, nobody remembers him, and his time of glory is over. Then there is the Christian who dies, "Joe" about the same time, believed and followed a God of the Bible most of his life. He has attempted to live a life that was taught by Jesus Christ is a whole life. He also dies, but as the atheist, there is nothing out there and he goes to be as the animals...to the dust. Both have lived their life of their own free will, and both have received the same reward....NOTHING.

Scenario two- "Billy" finds out one second after his death, that his belief in their being no resurrection, no life, no nothing after death, finds out he was terribly, and horribly mistaken. He finds himself in a black pit. There is no light, no laughter, no joy, sounds of anguish fill his ears. He is bumped once in a while by someone or something in the dark that he can't see, but feels. He senses total loss, total hopelessness, total despair and wonders, is this real? His throat is dry and parched. His mind is in a whirl of what is happening and he screams out in emotional pain of total loss. At the same time, the Christian "Joe" opens his eyes and peers back at loving eyes holding his hands pulling him up, standing him on his feet. Light is all around, people are laughing. Children are running and playing. the sights and smells are most intense than he ever experienced in the life he just left. He feels joy, everlasting hope, and an intense emotions of gratitude washes over Him, as the loving eyes, are his Lord and Savior welcoming him home. Where is this place? He doesn't know, but doesn't care, as he knows he will be taken care of, as His Lord is by his side.

Tell me reader, in the conjecture of each scenario starting with number one...what has each lost? Nothing, if there be no resurrection, and no life after death. They are both equal. They lived their life and the result is blackness...nothing...void...

But what of scenario #2? If the Christian "Joe" who believed on the Only Begotten Son of God is correct, what has he gained...? Answer....everything!! And conversely, what has the atheist lost.....again.....EVERYTHING!!

Jesus rightly said in Matthew 16: 26

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

You who are reading this, you don't like to think of yourself as a "fool", nobody does. But the bible says those who do not believe in God, or His Son, are just that. Concerning those two scenarios, I'm not a gambling man.

Never did well at betting on an unseen or unknown quantity. I sure am not so foolish to play Russian Roulette with my eternal destination for all the tea in China, let alone fleeting pleasures of this world. That is an over simplification of what I have spoken of. Who amongst you are so SURE in your belief that there is no God, that you would risk you very soul for all eternity, when this life is but a vapor in the wind, and gone so quickly? If you knew that if I am right, and I have testimony of countless millions outside the bible, and thousands insides of its pages that say I'm right, that eternity if forever either with God, are apart from Him forever, would you go one more day denying your need for putting your faith in the Only Begotten Son of God? . One is pure joy and the other is pure ...well, for a lack of a better word...HELL and all that it implies.

Ladies and gentleman, citizens of this fast dying world, where will you spend eternity? If the grim reaper came calling tomorrow, would you be "Billy" or "Joe" in my scenarios? Will you bet your soul on it? So my question to you, "Are you ready to die?"

This is Pastor Mike Taylor, praying the salvation of Jesus Christ find it's way into your life. If you need prayer, counseling, or just a listening ear, email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net. God bless you all.

TILL WE MEET AT JESUS FEET