

IF IT'S NOT LIFE, IT'S DEATH

"Let not your hearts be troubled; ye 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 unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Whither I go you know, and the way you know. And Thomas said unto Him, Lord we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? And Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me. And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever."

WHY AM I HERE?

As soon as man begins to live, he begins to die. Life and death always go together, for where you find one, you will find the other. If you can define life, you can understand death. If you can define death, you can understand life. If you know why you are here, you will know where you will spend eternity. If you know where you will spend eternity, you will know why you are here.

The reason most people don't know what happens after death is they don't know why they are here. Do you know why you are here? Do you know why God gave you breath? Can you define your purpose for being?

A definition for life is difficult to obtain. Life is referred to by some as "mysterious and undefined". Though such words as "consciousness", "energy", and "existence" are used, these definitions come short of what the Bible declares life to be.

In the opening verse of Genesis 1:1, we have these words: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Why were these heavens and earth created? They were created for life. We see in verse 11 of Genesis 1, life existing in grass, herb yielding seed, and the fruit of the trees. Verses 20 and 21 have these words: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good." Verse 24 goes on to say, "And God said, Let the water bring forth the living creature after his kind, Cattle and the creeping thing and the beast of the earth after his kind And it was so." In verse 26, to the culmination and the climax, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowls of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And so God created man in his own image--in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." We see that creation was made for man, and man was given life. Genesis 2: shows us that God formed man out of the dust of the ground. God breathed into this lifeless body the breath of life and man became a living soul.

When we look at God, as He is revealed in the Word of God, we see that He reveals Himself for what He is intrinsically. We see God's character and attributes. We notice that this sovereign or God of the universe is righteous, which means He is perfect; He is just, which means He is fair; and He is Love. We see that He is eternal life. Now in the measure we get to know and, through His Word we understand the principles of righteousness, justice, and love. Logically, in the measure we would understand God's Word, we would have to know what life is all about, for the Bible defines life and death. If God is life and the author of life, and man was made in the image of God and given a personality that could love God, then man would be reflecting God's Will and objective for him. Man became a walking reflection of the image of God.

So what is the Bible's definition for life? It could be summarized as "those actions that are compatible with God's perfect Will." Any action that fulfills God's perfect Will reflects His Life, and thus, the byproducts of these actions will last forever.

God made man perfect and placed him in a perfect environment. It was God's desire that it might continue that way-- forever. But because of man's rebellion against God, such was not the case.

WHAT RESULTED IN MAN'S REBELLION TO GOD?

Spiritual Death

What is death? Death is the antithesis of life. Life versus death is the great conflict in the Word of God. Starting in the book of Genesis, God said to man, "That of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:17) There was nothing in the fruit that caused man to die. That wasn't the issue. That tree stood as an opportunity for man to exercise negative volition toward God. Man did just that-- he rebelled against God.

Now when God made man and gave him life, man was given a personality, free volition, and the ability to make freewill choices that would enable him to act in obedience or disobedience to God. Thus, God said, "If you eat that tree, the day you do, you will die." They did eat, and they died. They died spiritually, which meant man could no longer fulfill the purpose for which God made him. This death was the consequence of rebellion or disobedience.

- The death that transpired in the Garden was not physical death, for it says, "The day you eat, you will die." We know from Genesis 5:5 that Adam did not die physically until he was 930 years old. But we're after the definition of death as found in Genesis 2:17. The day Adam and Eve ate of the tree, they were separated from God spiritually. The communication line between man and God was broken. Man could no longer fulfill the purpose for which God intended. God called that death.

Man today, being born a descendant of Adam, is born dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), thus he is void of true life. Man is void of the ability to fulfill a life of obedience to God, which God had originally intended for Adam. The reason why man cannot live righteously today and reproduce a life which is as good as God is good, is because he is void of true life.

PHYSICAL DEATH

Death defined means "separation", and when a person dies physically it means the soul of that person is separated from the body. Physical death is the by-product of spiritual death.

We have, in Romans 5:12, these words, "Wherefore as by one man, (Adam), sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Notice, sin and death always go together in the Bible, for death is the automatic consequence of sin. Because of Adam's rebellious disobedience in the Garden, he immediately fell under the curse of death. In that we are all born descendants of Adam, we too fell under the curse of death.

The great conflict in God's Word is life vs. death. As the result of spiritual death, which was internal, man began to deteriorate physically in an external way. Nature was placed under the curse so that no matter where man would turn, he would stare death straight in the face. We see evidence of man's deterioration when people stand in line at the clinics. Man is fighting decay. He is fighting degeneration and ultimate death. He is in a battle for survival and he cannot win. We were all born members of Adam's race, and in Adam all die. We are all born under the curse of sin, and we are all sinners. We are all in the same boat. The boat is sinking and there are no pumps.

We are told in Hebrew 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Sinful man, by nature, has an appointment with death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4) Sin, death, and separation from God all go together, just as God, righteousness, love, and eternal life go together.

ETERNAL DEATH

Eternal death is the third consequence of sin and physical death. When a person dies physically, he is subject to the second death, which is called eternal death. This person, according to II Thessalonians 1:9, will go to a place of eternal, conscious torment and punishment. This punishment will last forever. It states in the Bible that this is a "place where God is not." That means that if God is righteous, perfect, just, love, life, and light, then eternal death consists of darkness and everything that is the opposite of God.

God, understanding that we are dead individuals and can do nothing to gain His approbation, came to earth through the Virgin Birth, in the person of Jesus Christ. He came for one purpose--to die in your stead. After He died, He broke the shackles of sin and death. He arose again the third day, and now offers to you His very own Life. It was He who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life? Do you believe you need new life to escape death? The only solution afforded in God's Word to death is the person of Jesus Christ, the One who said, "I come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

If God is the source of life and has a monopoly on life, and if I stand before God as a dead man, I must obtain this life through God's provision, for I have nothing within myself to obtain it. As a sinner, declared to be unrighteous and ungodly by God's Word, what can I do to obtain that life? Nothing! God must provide that life from Himself through another source -- and this He did. This is the good news!

WHY DID CHRIST COME?

When Jesus Christ left the glories of heaven, He came to this earth by way of a virgin. He came to earth for one purpose-- to recreate people as new creatures in Christ. He provided a way whereby man could obtain life which was perfect, eternal, and everlasting.

Jesus Christ walked the face of this earth for 33½ years and never once had to say "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry." He was the unique God-Man. He was absolutely perfect. The lawcourts of heaven had no legal claim on Jesus Christ because He never violated God's Law. But such is not the case with man. The lawcourts of heaven must legally condemn man because he has failed to keep God's Law perfectly. Thus, the penalty of sin, which is death, hangs over man's head and man cannot escape. God cannot, in His Love say, "Well, we will just excuse what you did and make believe you didn't do it. I'll wink and turn my head and slip you in the backdoor of heaven anyway." You see, if the righteous lawcourts of heaven declared a penalty, God cannot alter it.

WHAT DID CHRIST DO?

God's Love became subservient to God's righteousness and God's justice. Jesus Christ came to earth and said, "In my love, I will give life. I will go to the Cross and turn the devil's sin-victory into complete defeat. There upon that Cross I will provide Life for the entire human race. While I hang there upon that Cross, God will pour out upon Me the iniquity of every man." Thus, "He (Jesus Christ) was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities and by His chastisement we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way." But God says, "I will lay upon Him the iniquities of you all," (Isaiah 53). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed," (I Peter 2:24). God made Christ "to be sin for us who knew no sin," that we as hellbound sinners, could be made perfect righteousness in Christ. (II Corinthians 5:21)

God bankrupted heaven in sending His Son to give His all. God didn't give the wealth of the universe to redeem your soul, because it wouldn't have been enough payment.

In Romans 5, we are told, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." You'd have to concede to the fact that, if a person would lay down his life for another individual, there was some affection involved. Though man may do that for a fellow man, Jesus Christ laid down His Life while we were sinners and had no use for God. Christ died for you while you didn't have one heartbeat Godward. He said, "I love you in spite of yourself, and I will die for you whether you appreciate it or not." So we are told in John 3:16:

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

Though Adam's sin was imputed to me and I am declared a sinner, my sin was laid upon Jesus Christ and imputed to Him. Imputation means that God attributes Adam's sin to ~~em~~ me because of his offense. I had nothing to do with what Adam did in the garden, but God says, "You're a sinner." It was as though I took the fruit. Yet God, in His Word, says that Jesus Christ was declared to be a sinner for you because He took your sin and laid it upon Himself. That's good news! The way in which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to me is based upon my willingness to respond to His love gift and His love offering. When I receive that gift of life, I respond to that love and say, "Thank you for dying for me and giving me eteranl life. I will receive that life by faith and live in the light of knowing where I am going to spend eternity."

Do you realize that God's main purpose in dying for the sins of the world was to secure for you a life which is eternal? Life, in time, is equated in the Word of God to a leaf and flower cut from life, which in a few days will wither and die. Your life is likened to

that flower. James say, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14)

HOW DO I GET THE BENEFITS?

When I talk about Jesus Christ dying on the Cross to provide eternal life, usually it doesn't upset anyone. In fact, people get the idea that everyone goes to heaven when they die. That's not true. What makes the difference between where a person spend eternity? Their personal acceptance of Jesus Christ.

There is a specific moment in time when a person is born physically. There is a moment when a person dies. There is a time when a person buys a home or has a baby. Do you realize that there is a moment in time when you must recognize your need of Jesus Christ and, by faith, make Him a reality in your life?

Quite often people say, "Don't tell me that person got saved. They were always saved." Oh no they weren't. There is no such thing as a person being born into the human race who will automatically go to heaven. We are all born on the wrong team. The Lord Jesus said to a Pharisee, who was a ruler of the Jews, "Nicodemus, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

What does it mean to be born again? It means to become a recipient of new life through Christ. When I make a decision to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, the Holy Spirit regenerates or makes alive my spirit. I am alive to God because of what Jesus Christ did for me.

Do you realize that unless you make something personal, it is of no value to you? I looked at a crucifix for 20 years and was going straight to Hell, though I knew I was a sinner and was taught that Jesus Christ died on a Cross. My problem was that I had never personally appropriated Him as my own.

The Bible says, "He that hath the Son, hath life," (I John 5:12). You cannot divide life from Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ..." (John 3:36). How ridiculous of a person to say he is a Christian and then when asked, "If you would die in ten seconds, where would you spend eternity?" The person would answer, "Oh, I don't know that. You can't know that until after you're dead."

If Christ is life, and a Christian is a Christ-One or one in whom Jesus Christ lives, then Christ becomes a greater and more intimate reality than even your wife or husband. I am in no sense of the word a Christian unless I know I have eternal life. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that ye may know that ye have eternal life..." (I John 5:13)

The problem develops, in many cases, when a person places their faith in the wrong object. The Bible says we are saved by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8,9) Grace is unmerited favor. Grace means God wants to give you something, not because of who and what you are, but because of what Jesus Christ did for you. On the basis of His death, God says, "I will give you the benefits. Will you take it?"

But that's not what religion says. Religion wants to be the middle-man, and says, "Though Christ died for you, you can't get to heaven unless we administer the ritual. Your faith must be in the ability of the sacraments and rituals to take care of your sins."

Thus, if you ask a person if they are a Christian, they may say, "Yes." If you ask, "When did you become one? When were you saved? When did you become the recipient of eternal life?", and they answer, "I was baptized", you know they have their faith in the wrong object. Their faith is in their church baptism, not Jesus Christ. I might continue by saying, "What did that baptism do for you?" They might answer, "Well, it took care of my sins." "Well, what did Jesus Christ say on the Cross when He died for your sins?" I might say, "Did He not say, 'It is finished'?" What was finished? Jesus Christ finished His work of dying on the Cross for your sins -- past, present, and future. How many sins then remain for the church to remove through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, masses, last rites, and the fires of purgatory?

If you don't like what you're reading, I want you to catch one thing-- My objective is to uplift Jesus Christ as the sole giver of life. No church can give life. If a person comes to the church where I preach, and they don't accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, they are on their way to Hell, because our church can't give them life. Jesus Christ gives life.

"It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The decision you make regarding Jesus Christ must be internal and personal. It is what "I" do with Jesus Christ that will determine where I will spend eternity. It is an individual and private response to the Gospel of Christ.

WHERE AM I GOING?

Tomorrow it may be your turn. Everyone has an appointment with death. God knows the time. Between the time you are born and the time you die physically, God is extending to you an opportunity to decide where you want to spend eternity. The decision is between spending it with Him or by yourself in total darkness. This place is ~~called Hell, better defined in Revelation 20 as "the Lake of Fire"~~ or the "second death."

However, the best is ahead for the child of God. Christ said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..." (John 10: The believer has a citizenship in heaven while he waits for his transfer. In I John 3:1-3, John says,

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now we are the sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is."

A believer will have a body which will be able to stand in the very presence of a Holy and Righteous God. That body will befit that glory. "Absent from the body is present with the Lord," the Bible says in II Corinthians 5. For a Christian to die, though it seems like the loss of all, God takes that seeming defeat and turns it into a complete victory. So Paul acknowledges in II Corinthians, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25,26)

Apart from Jesus Christ there is no resurrection and there is no life. Jesus Christ is the total and complete solution for death. Christ said, "I come that ye might have life," which, of course, is eternal. If you have eternal life, you have something death can never take away.

What is life? Life is perfection. Life is righteousness. Life is Jesus Christ. If I get ahold of that life of Christ, which is absolutely perfect, I will have a life which can move and carry on for eternity.

Do you have the life of Christ? Do you know Him as your Savior? After you know Him, you know why you are here. You have a reason for living because you know where you will spend eternity.

Do you know where you will spend eternity, should your heart skip a beat tonight?