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Resurrection or Reincarnation

Introduction

For those who remember “Little House on the Prairie,” there were two characters the viewers loved to hate, Nellie Olson and her mother Harriet. Despite the appearance of nastiness on-screen, off-screen they were, from all accounts, quite a happy group. As it comes to all, on November 13, 2018, Harriet died. Her real birth name was Katherine MacGregor and upon her death, Melissa Gilbert wrote, “I loved her and I find great comfort knowing that she is at peace and, per her beliefs, her soul has moved on to its next incarnation”. It was those last statements that caught my attention, “per her beliefs, her soul has moved on to its next incarnation” and caused me to consider, “What happens to our souls at the moment of death?” All of us have loved ones who have passed through the quickest journey ever taken when in a moment we leave this world and go into the next. Every degree of education, every skill one possesses or has learnt, and every iota of money one has is void of any value on the other side. Here we have a sojourn of a few years and now at 79 years I look back at notes from ministry in other places and am astounded that 40, 50, 60 years have passed. Where have they gone? Suddenly I find myself looking back over life, no longer a middle-aged individual, and now more than a senior citizen. What does life move on to, and where is it heading?

When I die, will I be like an animal, am I no different from a dog or cat? They have no eternity, they die and their body decays to dust. Perhaps there is another aspect of life like some of the world’s religions teach, something of a reincarnation either going upward toward God’s likeness, or being reincarnated into the same caste, or as an animal? When bodies are put into frozen nitrogen to be kept until a remedy can be found for the sickness they had, at which point they will be thawed and live again as before. Will that happen? The truth is, for all whose bodies have died, the individuals are still alive for the spirit never dies. All those whose bodies have died are now alive either in Heaven or Hell. Any possibility of them being brought back to life by the advancement of science is nothing more than the imaginations of individuals who reject the word of God.

The concept of being able to unfreeze the body, and at times replace the head, is contrary to the Scriptures of truth for God has decreed, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

The Fact of The Resurrection

In the resurrection the individual will receive another body, one that will never die. This is irrespective if they are in Heaven or Hell. It will be that of the individual as a human being (Acts 17:31), not a frog or some other animal or creature. God has made all creatures “after their kind” (Gen. 1:21, 24, 25). That means a human being will always be a human being and a dog will be a dog. Putting a person in liquid nitrogen is a vain attempt to acquire immortality but it is not correct for death, by God’s decree, is the result of sin (Rom. 5:12). In other words, every false ideology of man regarding the denial or obstruction of resurrection is a lie from Satan.

The question then becomes, “Is there such a thing as resurrection?” When a body is put in the ground and goes to dust, how can that be raised? When a body is burnt and the ashes scattered, how can that be raised or if one dies in an explosion or drowns at sea, how can they be made a human being again? Furthermore, how can they be constituted as a body being the same person as they were before death? There are several factors to consider:

- a) When a human dies the spirit does not die. In Luke 16:22 both the man in hell and the one in Abraham’s bosom were alive, even though the bodies had been disposed of. The burial of a body, the cremating, the scattering, and if blown apart, has nothing to do with the spirit. I repeat, it never dies. In resurrection the Lord gives a body similar to that while alive, but different in that it will never die.
- b) The resurrection of every human being and the judgment of every human being.
 - i) God has determined, “He (God) hath appointed a day, in the which He (God) will judge the world in righteousness by that man (Jesus) whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31) and “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16).

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- ii) It is irrelevant what is done to the body after death, God will raise them from the dead. There will be no nullifying His power or escaping His knowledge. John, the Holy Apostle, wrote “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” (Rev. 20:11-13).
- c) When anyone does a cursory consideration of a dead body as it goes to dust or disintegrates in the ocean, the questions often asked by sceptics are: How could a dead person come to life and what sort of a body would they have? In reality, the questions are easily answered because the scriptures record eight resurrections, seven of them individuals and one an undisclosed number. The seven individuals were:
 - i) the widow of Zarephath’s son (1 Kgs. 17:17-24) was raised by Elijah.
 - ii) the Shunammite’s son was raised by Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:18-37).
 - iii) the man who was raised when his body touched the bones of Elisha (2 Kgs. 13:20-21).
 - iv) the Lord made three resurrections when on earth, and in each case, whether in the Old Testament or New, they were raised by the power of God. Sometimes a word was spoken, sometimes an act and in one case the contact with the dead body of the prophet. When the Lord spoke the words to each they had the same body as they had before death. The three resurrected people were:
 - 1. Jairus’ daughter (Lk. 8:42, 49)
 - 2. the widow of Nain’s son (Lk. 7:12-14)
 - 3. and Lazarus (Jn. 11:14; 43, 12:1)
 - v) The one mass resurrection was when the Lord died, the graves were opened and the bodies of many saints rose from the dead (Matt. 27:50-53).
 - vi) After Pentecost and the ascension of the Lord, Tabitha whose Greek name was Dorcas was raised by Peter (Acts 9:36-43), and Paul was used by God to raise Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12).

Therefore, the question of how they are raised is simple, they were raised by the power of God.

- d) Furthermore, the question of how people will come back to life or what sort of body do they have is not a new question by man. It is as old as almost man is, as he has tried to use rationale to explain humanity which is unexplainable. None of us know how a caterpillar changes into a beautiful butterfly. We know the stages it goes through but how it happens we do not know. We are forced to accept by faith that there is a power that brings about the change and, accept the evidence that is known and seen. The same with the resurrection of the dead. The mind ignores the power and ability of the Almighty and is reduced to human reasoning, and then has a problem. When God is brought into the equation it all becomes possible for, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Lk. 18:27).

An Assumption That Misleads

From what has been said about the raised having the same bodies would also lead to the assumption that when the saved or unsaved rise from the dead, we will have the same identical bodies as we have now. This is an error. Several observations are to be made:

- a) These bodies are temporal. We are born, grow up, get old and die. They do not last forever and therefore, those who were raised from the dead, all died again. The eternal body will never die whether one is in Heaven or Hell. The Lord made this plain when He spoke of the place “where their worm dieth not” (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). The unsaved are cast into the Lake of Fire where there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth because they rejected Christ as the only way to salvation. They will never die.
- b) When the Lord comes at the rapture, all the saints, dead or alive, in fellowship in lifestyle with God or not, will be changed. Note the wording of the scriptures, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51). It does not say we will be in heaven in a moment in the twinkling of an eye but

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we will be changed, and at that moment these bodies, dead or alive, will have corruptible bodies changed, have moral bodies changed, to bodies which are incorruptible, sinless and immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

What sort of a body will the believer have?

It will be like the Lord's body of glory, a body eternally impervious to disease and impervious to sin, a body that is perfectly suited to live in Heaven or on earth, a body that man-made obstacles like closed doors etc. will not obstruct. We shall live in the paradise of God, and He shall lead us to eternal delights, dwell in a sinless society, and know the fullness of His fellowship for all eternity.

. . . . *Rowan Jennings*