

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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After Death, What Then?

Death is not something that we like to think about but it is a reality. The Scriptures reinforce that which we all soon learn when they record that there is **“a time to be born and a time to die”** (Eccl. 3:2). Visit any cemetery and you can't really tell much difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. The dead lie buried side by side, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, famous and infamous, believers and non-believers.

Three simple biblical truths regarding death are:

- a) Sin results in death. (1 Cor. 15:56)
- b) Sin and death passed from Adam and Eve to all humanity.
 - i) The Apostle Paul writes, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12)
- c) Everyone has an appointment with death.
 - i) Hebrews 9:27 states, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” We cannot change, delay, hasten or escape it. This does not mean that God “pre-determines” the time of the death of each individual, but that He “foresees” the time of one's death. While tragedies like suicide may shock and surprise us, God foresaw those events even before they occurred.

The big question is, “Where does someone go after they die?” The simple truth is, when you die, you will continue to exist and where you spend eternity depends on the choices you make in the here and now. There are only two options.

- a) The lost (unbelievers) go to eternal judgment in Hell. (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 13:49-50)
- b) The redeemed (believers) go to heaven to be with the Father. (Jn. 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23)

What happens after death is widely argued among non-Christians. Although many in our culture either deny or ignore the reality of Hell, it is a terrible place. Faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ changes the destination of the lost. When one puts their faith and trust in the Lord to save them, their final destination will be heaven and they will be able to sing, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be; when we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory.”

There are basically three un-Biblical views of the afterlife which are contrary to what the Bible teaches:

- a) REINCARNATION which is the belief that an individual does not die once physically but has lived previous lives, and after they die the individual will return in another life form. This teaching is that if an individual has lived a good life, they come back as a higher life form, but if not, such an one will be reborn as a bug or snake. Reincarnation is embraced by the Eastern Religions and the New Age Religion in America.
- b) ANNIHILATION is the belief that an individual ceases to exist at the moment of death, they are simply annihilated. The word comes from the Latin word nihil meaning “nothing.” Death is the end of everything. This is basically the belief held by atheists and agnostics.

- c) UNIVERSALISM is the belief that all people will be “universally restored” after they die. In other words, it teaches that everyone, regardless of how they lived their lives on earth will eventually be among the redeemed in heaven.

Death for the Believer

For those who have accepted the Lord as their personal Saviour, at the moment of death they will immediately be in the presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). Their bodies will not be transformed, they are in an unclothed state (2 Cor. 5:2, 4), that transformation will happen when the Lord comes, then they will be changed and given new bodies. The Apostle Paul writes, “We shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51). He indicates that four things will change upon the death of a Christian (1 Cor. 15:42-44):

- a) Our corruption will be changed to incorruption
- b) Our dishonor will be changed to glory
- c) Our weakness will be changed to power
- d) Our natural body will be changed to a spiritual body.

All of this reminds us that our sinful nature takes a toll on us physically and spiritually, but according to 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, we will be changed either by the rapture or the resurrection.

For those who know the Lord as their own personal Saviour, the Bible informs us that we will be ushered into the presence of Christ in heaven. He is in heaven now (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7).

- a) Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:43). The thief had made a profession of faith. He said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” He had enough faith to believe and put his trust in the Lord.
- b) On two other occasions Paul spoke of death as ushering us into the presence of Christ:
 - i) “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” (Phil. 1:23-24)
 - ii) “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: For we walk by faith, not by sight: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” (2 Cor. 5:6-9)
- c) We will have the victory over death, “Death is swallowed up in victory . . . thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:54-57)
 - i) We see two important facts in this text. First, death is our enemy, but thankfully, Jesus is our Victor. By His resurrection Jesus broke the power of death and in so doing, He promised that death would not be able to hold those that believe in Him. If our Lord tarries, we will all succumb to death. Death will touch us like a shadow, but it cannot hold us. Death is not the end it is a new beginning.

Death for the Un-Believer

For those who have rejected Christ, at the moment of their death the Bible informs us they will be cast into outer darkness, a place of everlasting punishment, a place called Hell. They will be separated from God and enter a reality completely devoid of His grace and blessing for all eternity.

- a) In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus speaks of Lazarus as being taken to heaven when he died but the rich man, because he did not heed the Scriptures, a split second after he died he immediately entered into Hell being in great torment, and was excluded from the blessing of heaven (Lk. 16:22-26). The rich man lived a life of ease and luxury, but he didn’t have a personal relationship with God.
- b) We can see from these illustrations that death is not the end of our existence. The rich man and Lazarus lived totally different lives, but they had one thing in common, they both died. Death is no respecter of persons. It doesn’t limit itself to the homeless, or the poor. Death knocks on the doors of the rich as well as the poor. We all have bodies and souls. Death is the separation of body and soul, not the end of our being.

Conclusion

Dear friend, I must warn you there really IS a Hell and if you don’t know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, Hell will be your destination for all eternity. It doesn’t matter how much money you have, or how morally pure you are, if you don’t know Jesus, you’re headed there.

Many think that only wicked and evil people will be in Hell, but there will be many good, religious people there as well. The rich man was a religious man but after he died, his religion or his money couldn’t save him. In Hell he begged

Abraham, “have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Lk. 16:23-24) but his cries were futile. His next concern was for his brothers who were just like him—religious but lost (Lk. 16:27-28). Once you die, there is no way to cross over from Hell to heaven. If we could hear the voices of Hell, they would be begging for someone to go warn their loved ones not to come there for there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth for all eternity (Matt. 8:12; 13:50; Lk. 13:28).

The Bible teaches many religious people will be surprised on Judgement Day. These are people who go to church, give their money, and speak the right religious words. They are depending on their good works to get them to heaven. Only those who have put their faith and trust in the Lord will be in heaven. Jesus said, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23).

When I think of all the calamities that are happening in this world today, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, terrorism, I beg of you to think of where you will spend eternity. We are not promised tomorrow. Think back to the mass shooting in Las Vegas, they were going out for a night of enjoyment and it ended up a night of terror. Not one of those who went out into eternity knew that would be the day of their death.

Can you say you aren't afraid to die? Do you know Jesus Christ? Is He real to you? I'm not asking if you are religious or if you go to church. Attending church won't save you, infant baptism won't save you, good works won't save you, living a moral life won't save you. You must believe that you are a sinner, confess your sins, believe that Jesus died for your sins, that He rose again and is seated at God the Father's right hand, ever interceding for us. If you do, the moment you die you will be with Him for eternity.

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
(John 14:6)

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.
(Romans 3:23)

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
(Romans 10:9)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:9)

. . . . Yvonne Vernon

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