

507 What Will Happen to Me After I Die?

No one likes to talk about death or even think about it, yet death is a topic we cannot avoid. Heb. 9:27 says, “it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment.” From our earliest days we have heard of judgment, heaven and hell. We know that there is something beyond this life, but we don’t know what. Popular thinking, movies, television programs often bring up more questions than they give answers. What does God say will happen to me and you when we die?

Tonight we’re going to talk about a very sensitive subject, and I thought I might move away from the pulpit and speak with you friend to friend. I am praying that the time we spend together will be like two friends having a heart-to-heart conversation. Life is short, and death is certain. Even if you are young and healthy, you cannot escape the reality that death is real.

James described death this way: James 2:26 “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” Notice that it says the body is dead, but we are something more than body. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” On the cross, Jesus told the thief, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) There is an inner spirit that survives death.

Death has a certain mystery. We know that it will happen but don’t know what it will bring. The most frightening aspect of death is the fact that we will face a judgment. We worry whether our future lives will be one of peace. Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (Matt. 7:13-14). This is a surprise to many people. They think many will be saved and only the worst lost.

When we talk about salvation; it becomes crucial to think about the afterlife. What are we saved by? the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What are we saved from? The penalty of sin. Jesus warned, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.” (Matt. 5:29-30) Jesus gives us a glimpse of what happens after death in Luke 16:

Luke 16:19-31 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ‘And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.’

And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’” This story is the only glimpse in Scripture we have to tell us what happens when we die.

Many people think this story is a parable and should not be taken seriously. But Jesus himself used this story to make a very important point. When the Bible uses figures of speech like a parable, it does so to emphasize a point not to ignore it. However one takes this story, one has to realize that there are two very different destinies awaiting after death. One is filled with comfort and the other with agony. The lives we live here, and whether we are right with the Lord, will determine our future destiny.

This is why it is so very important to be prepared spiritually. No one else can do that for you. 2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. The wonderful thing is that the saved, believer in Christ goes to judgment with the blood of Jesus and having his name in the book of life. He can face the afterlife with confidence and assurance that he has an eternal home with the Lord. The unbeliever, the impenitent person has no such hope. He must face God on his own.

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Everyone will be there—every country, every century, every tongue, and every race. The great will be judged right along with the humble. Each person will be judged by God’s standards (not men’s standards). We will be wanting to know if our name is written in the book of life. Nothing else will matter on that day.

(Matt. 16:24-27) Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.

Luke 9:26 “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.

Jesus has prepared heaven for those who believe, love, and obey Him. He has room in his heart for all, but he won’t force you to follow Him. Rom. 6:16-18 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Acts 17:30-31 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

The Bible also teaches the need to obey the Lord in baptism, where we are baptized into his death. It is in baptism that we contact the blood. Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 22:16 Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

Romans 6:3-7 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Gal. 3:26-27 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Baptism is an act of faith in God. It is God in baptism that cleanses us in the blood of Jesus. It is God who causes our new birth and makes us His children, so that we can live forever with Christ.

It is not the will of God that any person be lost—He wants everyone to be saved. He would not have sent Jesus to die on a cross, if He were looking to condemn everyone. But God will not make people do what is right.

God has prepared the way for your salvation in the *gift* of His beloved Son, Jesus. It is by His grace you are saved. But grace as a gift must be received by faith and obedience. We don’t earn our salvation, but God has determined that those who receive His gift are those who met his conditions. Heb. 5:8-9 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation. Your gift is ready for you if you believe, repent and are baptized. Have you prepared?

Death is something all of us will face one day. I want to go to heaven. I’ve never met anybody that didn’t want to go to heaven. But to go to heaven, you and I have to be prepared. I have life insurance to protect my wife in case something should happen to me. I wanted to prepare so that she could live comfortably. I’ve known people to buy a plot, choose the casket, and arrange the service long before the time.

How foolish it is to be so well prepared for death here but fail to prepare myself spiritually for the hereafter. I do wish to be like the five foolish virgins, who waiting for bridegroom, failed to buy the oil needed for their lamps. You remember, they ran to the dealers to buy oil; and while they were gone, the bridegroom came. The door was shut. And they were not allowed in. (Matt. 25:1-14). There is a time to prepare in this life, and the time will come when the opportunity is over. Don’t waste your opportunity to be right with God; once your life is over, there is no second chance.

Why not tonight start a new and different direction for your soul’s sake? Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). You can lose your car, your house, your health, or your life and still go to heaven. But if you miss heaven, you’ve missed everything.

Don’t let anything keep you from the most important commitment you’ll ever make, that of giving yourself to the Lord by obeying the gospel. In a moment Ryan Daniel will tell you how you can learn more about the Lord and his church and how you can a copy of this program.

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