

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

What do you think? "If a man die shall he live again?" This is the ultimate question and it is in answer to this question, that the following statements are offered.....

Jesus challenged men by setting forth the ultimate goal of eternal life, in contrast to losing that life. The early Christians went singing into the arena of lions because they had firm convictions concerning their destiny after the pilgrimage of this world was over. Such understanding and strong convictions are desperately needed today.

But today among the church world there is dreadful reluctance to identify the destiny of either saint or sinner. The result is that there is little enthusiasm over the hope for the Christian and very little fear of God's wrath for the sinner, with one exception, most view God as a tyrantical revengeful tormentor who punishes sinners continually, throughout eternity!

"What is man?", ask the psalmist David in Psa.8:4. Is man an immortal soul housed in a material body? What is death? What is life? Are the un-repentant dead now suffering perpetual torment? Are the dead in Christ already enjoying their eternal reward in the glorified state of immortality? Then what happens at the judgment? What is the meaning of the resurrection???

The idea expressed at many funerals is that there in reality is no death at all, that the 'dead' person has not died truly, that in fact death is the entrance into a greater life. After doing everything possible to keep someone alive, when he is now dead, they say, he hasn't really died but is now more alive than ever. Especially when applied to the believer, death is said to now be life.....When applied to the unbeliever it is then said, death isn't death or life but it means 'separation from God', part life only continuing in a state of total misery. Preachers widely publish the expression that each person has an 'immortal soul' which cannot die. Yet the crux of the matter is that Christ died for our sins that we might be delivered from the penalty of sin, the 'second death', and have eternal life.

If man consists primarily of something that cannot die, then man cannot die; meaning he cannot die now or at the final judgment. But scripture repeatedly affirms that 'the wages of sin is death' and 'the soul that sins it shall die.' (Rom 6:23) It was Satan, the great deceiver, who first stated, 'Thou shalt not surely die.' (Gen 3:4). Christ said that Satan is a liar and the father of all lies. (Joh 8:44).

To understand how a soul dies, we need to understand what a soul is. What better way to arrive at such an conclusion than to search the story of creation as told by the creator, ALMIGHTY GOD?

....."And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). God recorded this truth for man to fully understand his very nature as well as his destiny. It is MAN that is formed out of dust, It is MAN that is called soul. After sinning God said "For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." (Gen 3:19). Nothing here about 'separation' or 'immortal soul'.

The creation scriptures teach us:

(1) That man did not preexist, in some soul factory where souls float around awaiting to be sent to earth and joined to a body, but man was created by God, which means that at one moment he was not in existence at all, but was spoke into existence by God. Now, new life is being conceived inside every mother's womb. A woman does not give birth in order to give life, but a woman give birth because there is life within her. The soul was not in existence till' God formed man and breathed the breath of life into him. It follows that the same is true for every person that God gives life to, there are no pre-existent souls!

(2) "Soul" is not something placed inside of man nor given from God to man nor is it a part of God incorporated into man. That which gave life to the body was called 'the breath of life'.... the same thing which describes the life of animals (Gen 1:20-30). Paul said "....seeing He himself giveth to all life, breath and all things... for in Him we live and move and have our very being....." (Acts 17:25-28). The combination of body and spirit (the breath of life) is what constitutes the soul.

Body plus spirit equals soul! There is not one scripture to support the idea that man is an immortal soul living for an earthly moment in a temple of clay and then when the body dies the soul/man really keeps on living.

(3) If bringing together of body and spirit by God produces soul; then in the dissolution of the two (body and spirit) would mean the destruction of the soul! If not, why not? Again, If not, why not?

This subject is too complex for such a short study, but let's summarize:

Man is mortal, under the sentence of final death, and unable to save himself from it. His body, like beasts and plants, returns to dust and his spirit or soul or being is held in the place or condition God called Sheol(O.T.) or Hades(N.T.) until Judgment Day! These words are often translated 'hell' or 'grave', but in the Hebrew and Greek simply meant a hidden or unseen place. The consistent teaching in both O.T. and N.T. as to the state of man in sheol/hades is to refer to it by the figure 'sleep', indicating a condition oblivious of the passage of time but subject to the sovereign command of Christ as the 'shout' of the Archangel and/or the Trumpet blast to awaken those back to life in preparation of Judgment.(1-Thess 4:16).

Being created in the image of God and for His purpose, every soul must be recalled from this first death to stand before God in the Judgment, where each person will hear the final sentence for eternity from Christ Himself (Acts 17:30). The outcome of this judgment will be eternal life in a perfect environment for those who are redeemed, but eternal death by fire for the unsaved. This is called the 'second death' because it is similar to the first death except the consequence of this death is final and eternal.

Salvation is nothing less than the salvaging of man from this final, ultimate destruction that he might have life in God's image, and it is accomplished through Christ receiving the sentence of death for each of us, 'the just for the unjust', thus satisfying the just penalty for sin with regard to all those who through faith are called His People. We may have full assurance for our own salvation because Christ paid the full price of our sins; Death, nothing more and nothing less. Thanks to Him, the family of God will live forever!!!

Judgment is described as a total cleansing of the creation (Matt 3:2) of all that is contrary to God's purpose. The sinner is not nearly put out of sight so he can be tormented by seeing all the pleasure up in heaven and so he can still be in rebellion against God. Sin and the sinner must pay the penalty God placed upon Satan and all that follow him, from the beginning of time, that penalty calls for both to perish together, so that God may be 'all in all in the midst of His holy, now immortal bodied new creations, living and reigning in Heaven.

The power of the Gospel (the death, burial and resurrection of Christ) is the power of life, when it is properly understood that man has no innate immortality of his own but that life is imparted to him by the final act of God on man in the resurrection. Either he believes in Christ to eternal life, or he perishes. (John 3:16)

..."seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. But according to His promise, we look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2-Pet 3:11-13.

PRAISE GOD HE'S COMING AGAIN !!!

Yours for Truth and Freedom..... Horace Hooper