

# Plain Talk On Death

## Its Certainty

There are few things absolutely certain in life, but death is one of them. You can count on it for sure!<sup>1</sup> Everyone has a birth date and everyone will have a death date. The countless number of cemeteries all around us bear testimony to this undisputed fact. Some of our friends and loved ones have already passed on and others will follow. Our death date is coming—the only thing uncertain about it is the time. But we all know that none of us will live to see our 150<sup>th</sup> birthday—we can be quite sure of that.

In an Indian cemetery, there is a tombstone with these words:

*Pause, stranger, when you pass by,  
As you are now—so once was I;  
As I am now you soon shall be,  
So prepare for death and follow me.*

## Its Fear

---

<sup>1</sup>The Bible does mention some unusual exceptions to the certainty of physical death, such as Enoch and Elijah. We also are told of a whole generation of believers who will not experience of physical death (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), a great mystery indeed! But these rare exceptions only prove the rule.

Death is the king of fears (Hebrews 2:14-**15**). There are many phobias that enslave men, but none is greater than the fear of death. The thought of death is so unpleasant that we constantly try to put it out of our minds. We are rushing to the grave and we will be there shortly, but we don't want to think about it, much less prepare for it.

## Facing the Inevitable

“It is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). We make an appointment with the doctor or dentist and we may or may not keep that appointment. But we all have an appointment with death and this appointment will be kept without fail. The doctor's office often gives us a card with the time of our next appointment written on it. Our appointment with death is different. We know we have an appointment, but in most cases the time of that appointment is unknown. In some cases, as with a terminal illness, the person may know that the time of the appointment is drawing very close. In other cases there is no such warning. On September 11, 2001 thousands went to work at the World Trade Center towers as on any other day. They never imagined that this would be their last day on earth. The same could be said of the victims of the Johnstown (PA) Flood of 1889 (2209 killed) or the victims of the Titanic (1525 killed). For some, death can come very unexpectedly.

## Can a Person Prepare For Such an Appointment?

One of the first things that must be done is to simply face the inevitable. Intellectually we know that we are going to die and if we were asked about it we would quickly reply, “Of course I'm going to die. This happens to everyone?” But our mind plays games with us and more often than not we think thoughts such as this: “It will never happen to me. It happens to others all the time, but it won't happen to me!” We deny what we intellectually know

to be true because we just don't want to face up to the awesome reality of death.

I remember the first time it really dawned on me that I was going to die (even though I had known this intellectually for years). When it really hit me it struck terror into me. I happened to be in a barber shop waiting to get my hair cut. I was in high school at the time in West Hartford, Connecticut. Instead of reading the comics or some magazine, for some strange reason I started thinking about other things. All of a sudden the reality of death clobbered me and I could almost feel adrenaline rushing through my body. *I, George Zeller, am really going to die.* I was never so scared in all my life. I actually enjoyed living, and the thought of not living terrorized me for those brief moments. After that I tried not to think about it, but every once in a while it would come back to me again, though never with quite the same force that it did on that day. My barber probably wondered why I was so white!

## What Happens to a Person?

What actually will happen to me when I die? When people die they don't come back to tell us about their experiences.<sup>2</sup> A person can know for sure what will take place after death, but let's hold that for later.

There are basically three possibilities: 1) Nothing happens at all. The person simply ceases to exist. 2) After the person dies he comes back to earth, perhaps in another form (As another person?

---

<sup>2</sup> Near death experiences are just that. The person was near death but did not actually die. If the person had actually died, then he would not come back. Thus, near death experiences, while fascinating, do not help us to understand what takes place AFTER DEATH.

As an animal? As a plant?). 3) There is an afterlife. That is, there is existence beyond the grave. A person does not "pass away" but he actually "passes on." Let's consider the first two of these possibilities:

## 1) Materialism

What happens at death? The first possibility is that nothing happens at all. The person simply ceases to exist (as far as conscious existence is concerned).

This view, held by many today, is based on the philosophy of materialism. This theory proposes that physical matter is the only reality and that all being and processes and phenomena can be explained as manifestations or results of matter. In other words, those holding this view teach that *the only thing that matters is matter!* This is the theory which underlies such movements as communism<sup>3</sup> and evolution.

According to materialism, man is nothing more than a body. There is no such thing as a soul or spirit. Man is nothing but bones, blood, brains, etc. Man is a mere collection of atoms and molecules and chemicals and nothing more. Since man is only a body and nothing more, when the body dies, that's it! The person ceases to have any conscious existence beyond the grave, even though the atoms and molecules that made up the person will

---

<sup>3</sup> Communism, as to its core belief, is atheistic. Since communists deny God, they must also deny that there is a Creator. If nothing has ever been created, then matter must be eternal. The Bible teaches that God, not matter, is eternal (Psalm 90:2) and that matter was created during the six days of creation (Genesis 1).

continue to exist<sup>4</sup>, as the body returns to dust, etc. Those who hold to such a view believe that **death ends all**. There is no hope for continued conscious existence beyond the grave. This life is all there is.

This is somewhat the view that I held at the time I was terrified with the thought of death in the barber shop. Although I had been raised in a religious environment and was taught some things about heaven and an afterlife, I somehow thought that death ends all. Many people today think the same.<sup>5</sup>

## 2) Reincarnation

When we speak of “incarnation” we are referring to the time when God came in human flesh: “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The term “reincarnation” refers to a coming again in the flesh or a coming back in the flesh. It refers to the rebirth of a soul into a new body or a new form of life (possibly as an animal?). This theory implies that we may have once had a prior life on earth (perhaps I was once Attila the Hun or Thomas Jefferson or a skunk) and that I will probably have many more lives in the future.

Hindu people believe that the soul goes through many successive

---

<sup>4</sup> According to the first law of thermodynamics, energy (matter) can neither be created nor destroyed.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord Jesus settled forever the question of whether or not man is just a body and nothing more. In Matthew 10:28 He said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” According to this statement, there is a non-physical, non-material part of man which survives the grave (“the soul”) and there is also an afterlife (“in hell”).

rebirths. The rebirth may be to a higher form, i.e. to a member of a higher caste or god. However the rebirth may be down the social ladder to a lower caste, or as an animal, since the wheel of Karma (action in a previous life) applies to both man and animals. Hindus teach that all creatures, both men and beasts, are in their current situations because of the actions (Karma) of previous lives.

The Bible strikes down the theory of reincarnation in one sweeping statement: “**It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment**” (Hebrews 9:27). If reincarnation were true, a person would die a number of times and keep being reborn into other forms, but the Bible says that men are appointed to die just ONCE. After death we are not sent back to earth in another form. The Scripture teaches that death is followed by the judgment—the time when we will stand before the God who created us.

## 3) Is There Really An Afterlife?

Does death end all or is there really an existence after the grave? Why not ask your deceased grandfather or great grandfather about this perplexing question and see what he might say about it! This is exactly the problem. Those who die can never come back and tell us about it. Death is a one way street, a passage of no return.

There are two great unknowns in life, neither of which can ever be discovered apart from outside help (supernatural help). The first unknown involves the future; the second unknown involves the grave and what lies beyond it.

Men would love to know what the future will bring, but there is only one Person who knows the future. Concerning future events, we are totally in the dark. We don’t even know what will happen

later today.<sup>6</sup> There is only one Person who knows the end from the beginning (see Isaiah 46:9-10). Thankfully He not only knows it, but it is all under His control. He has also revealed to us some of the things that will happen in the future, but this is not our topic for now.<sup>7</sup>

Just as the future is unknown to us, so there is great mystery about what lies beyond the grave. How can this mystery be solved? How can we gain information about the afterlife that is solid and certain and sure? In all of history there is only one Person who has conquered death. The grave has held everyone else in its tight grip, but one Person burst forth out of that prison and came back to life. Great religious leaders and other great men have all been buried and their remains are still with us today (even if they be but dust), with one amazing exception:

Abraham's tomb	occupied!
Moses' tomb	occupied!
Confucius' tomb	occupied!
Gautama Buddha's tomb	occupied!
Mohammed's tomb	occupied!
<i>Jesus' tomb</i>	<b><i>EMPTY!!!</i></b>

## The Uniqueness of Christ

While most people today use the Name of Christ only as a curse word, there are others who are drawn to this Man because of the

---

<sup>6</sup> If psychics really could predict the future, why wouldn't they quit their jobs and invest in the stock market or bet at the races?

<sup>7</sup> See our set of study notes, *Prophecy—Preview of Coming Events*, also available on our Web Site: [www.middletonbiblechurch.org](http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org)

uniqueness of His life. One person has described His life and influence in this way:

Nearly 2000 years ago in an obscure village, a child was born of a lowly woman. He grew up in another village where He worked as a carpenter. When He was about 30 He taught and preached.

This Man never went to college or seminary. He never wrote a book. He never held public office. He never had a family. He never traveled over 200 miles from His birthplace. While only in His 30's He was sentenced to death on a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had--the simple coat He had worn. His body was laid in a borrowed grave. Three days later this Man arose from the dead--living proof that He was, as He had claimed, the Saviour whom God had sent, the Incarnate Son of God.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure of the human race. On our calendars His birth divides history into two eras. One day of every week is set aside in remembrance of Him. Our two most important holidays celebrate His birth and resurrection. This one Man's life has furnished the theme for more songs, books, poems, and paintings than any other person or event in history. Thousands of colleges, hospitals, orphanages and other institutions have been founded in honor of this One who gave His life for us. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the governments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned have not changed the course of history as much as this One Solitary Life.

Let's consider the most significant event in the life of this unique Person:

## The Resurrection of Christ

The tomb was empty. The lifeless body of the crucified Christ was laid in a new tomb, a giant stone was rolled up against the grave's only entrance, and the burial site was guarded by Roman soldiers (Matthew 27:62-66). How do we explain the fact that on the third day this tomb was found to be empty? Not even Harry Houdini could have gotten out of that one!

The resurrection of Christ is one of the most thoroughly and solidly documented events in history. There were numerous eye witnesses who saw the risen Christ. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 where we are given a listing of different people who saw the Lord alive after His death, including over 500 people on one occasion (verse 6). If an impartial jury could have all the evidence presented to them, including an abundance of testimony from eyewitnesses, the members of the jury would be forced to conclude that Christ rose again from the dead. The facts of the case overwhelmingly support this conclusion.

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of Christianity. If someone could prove that the resurrection never happened, it would destroy Christianity and render it a false religion and a lie. Anyone considering the claims of Christianity should begin with the empty tomb. If Christ did not rise again from the dead, then how do you explain the empty tomb?

George Lyttelton (1709-1773) was a famous English writer and statesman who lived during the period when rationalism, agnosticism and deism were very prominent in Western Europe. Just before he died, he told his close friend and biographer, Dr. Samuel Johnson: "When I first set out in the world I had friends who endeavored to shake my belief in the Christian religion. I saw difficulties which staggered me...."

Lyttelton and a friend by the name of Gilbert West, being fully persuaded that the Bible was unreliable, determined to expose

Christianity as a falsehood. Lyttelton chose the Conversion of Paul and Mr. West the Resurrection of Christ for the subject of hostile criticism. Both sat down to their respective tasks full of prejudice. However, the result of their separate attempts was that they were both converted by their efforts to overthrow the truth of Christianity. They came together, not as they expected, to exult over an imposture exposed to ridicule, but to lament over their own folly and to felicitate each other on their joint conviction that the Bible was the Word of God. Their able inquiries have furnished two of the most valuable treatises ever written in favor of revelation, one entitled, "Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul" and the other "Observations on the Resurrection of Christ."<sup>8</sup>

Have you ever seriously considered the resurrection of Christ? How do you explain the empty tomb? Some, like Mr. West, discredit the resurrection and ridicule it. But have they ever sat down as Mr. West later did, and looked at the historical accounts and seen for themselves the wealth of evidence pointing to the fact that the One who was crucified rose again? Most people never even bother to examine the record or weigh the evidence.

Suppose a religious or political leader living today began to make the following announcement over the radio: "I want you all to know that when I go to London, my enemies will murder me, my body will be buried, but in less than a week's time I will come

---

<sup>8</sup> Another example of a skeptic being transformed as a result of examining the evidence is the case of Lew Wallace, the author of *Ben Hur*. Wallace was a friend of the famous infidel, Robert Ingersoll. One day Ingersoll challenged him, "Lew, why don't you write a book and prove to the world once and for all that Jesus Christ was nothing but a mythical figure, much less the Son of God?" Wallace spent a great deal of time and money investigating every shred of evidence he could find, and his conclusions were far different from what Ingersoll had hoped, as any reader of *Ben Hur* knows.

back from the dead and hundreds of people will see me.” What an extraordinary prediction! And yet the Lord Jesus made these kinds of statements repeatedly during His ministry on earth (see Matthew 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32; etc.).

It is important to notice that Christ was seen by all kinds of people at different times and under different circumstances. On one occasion He appeared to just one person; on another occasion He appeared to two people. Several times Christ was seen by seven or more people. On one occasion there were more than 500 people who saw the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:6). Of those who saw the resurrected Lord, some were women and others were men. One was a tax-collector, others were fishermen, one was a skeptic (Thomas), another had recently denied Christ (Peter) and another was an enemy of Christianity (Saul of Tarsus).

The risen Lord was also seen under all sorts of conditions. Some saw Him in a garden, others saw Him in a room, others talked with Him on a road, and others ate with Him by the Sea of Galilee. He appeared more than once in Judea and more than once in Galilee and once He appeared north of Galilee near Damascus (Acts 9). Some met Him on a mountain; some saw Him at the dawn of day, others during the bright light of day, still others at night. After His death, He was seen alive for a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3). A medical doctor of the first century underscored the certainty of the resurrection as proven by the post-resurrection appearances of Christ when he said this: “He (Jesus) showed Himself alive after His passion (death) by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3).

Those who deny the resurrection have tried in vain to come up with satisfactory explanations for why the tomb was empty. Different people have suggested the following weak theories (except for #5 which I made up myself):

### **1) The disciples stole the body of Jesus.**

First of all, how would they have gotten past the Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb and how would they have moved the giant rock which was rolled against the tomb’s entrance? But even more significant is this: If the disciples had stolen the body, then they would have known that Jesus was dead. Why then would they have gone forth and fearlessly preached that He rose again? Most of them were killed because of the message that they preached. Men seldom lay down their lives for what they know to be a lie or a falsehood.

### **2) The women went to the wrong tomb and found it to be empty.**

If they had made such a mistake it is certain that the authorities would have quickly called this fact to their attention. If the enemies of Christianity had known where the body was, would they not have produced it? This would have once and for all proven that the resurrection was a falsehood. All they had to do was produce the body, but they never did.

### **3) The people who claimed to see Christ actually had hallucinations and visions. They thought they saw Christ but they really didn’t.**

This might answer one or two isolated cases, but it’s impossible that 500 people on one occasion would all be afflicted by mass hallucinations (1 Corinthians 15:6). And again, this could have easily been answered by bringing forth the dead body of Jesus.

- 4) **Jesus did not really die on the cross, and when He was put in the tomb He was still alive. When people later saw Him alive, it was because He had never died!**

I once read the following in a newspaper clipping: **Q:** Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?

**A:** Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes; buffet him repeatedly; nail him to a cross, hang him in the sun for six hours; run a spear through his heart, embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for many hours and see what happens!

- 5) **A UFO came and took away the body out of the tomb by means of a molecular transporter device.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Do you have a *reasonable* explanation for why the tomb was empty? I've only found one that fits the facts and harmonizes with all the evidence: *Jesus really did rise again from the dead*, just as the many eyewitnesses declared. One of those eyewitnesses wrote this (speaking of himself even though he uses the third person): "This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and *we know that his testimony is true*" (John 21:24).

### Back to Our Subject

We took a detour to think about the resurrection. There was a reason for doing so. How can I know what lies beyond the grave? The only safe and solid solution is to go to the only Person who has conquered the grave and come back from the dead. I'm going

to let Him be my Guide and my Teacher when it comes to life and death. If anyone knows, He does. He is the One who has "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

If you are not convinced that Jesus Christ is the only reliable Authority on the subject of death and life beyond the grave, then the following paragraphs may not be as persuasive as they might otherwise be. But you have come this far and I would hope that you might read to the end. Has anyone ever shown you, from the pages of the Bible, what the Scriptures teach about life and death, heaven and hell? I'll try to make this as brief and as simple as possible.

I have tried to show that Jesus Christ is the only true Authority when it comes to what lies beyond the grave. He has given us solid and sure answers to this great mystery, and these answers are found in His Word, the Bible. Jesus said that God's Word is TRUTH (John 17:17) and can be fully trusted (Matthew 24:35).

### Life and Death— What is it All About?

Death entered our world as the result of man's sin and disobedience: "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" (Romans 5:12). God gave Adam a simple command: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).<sup>9</sup> Adam was told that he would die

---

<sup>9</sup> In my first year in college I met a fellow student who actually believed in the historicity of Adam and Eve. I thought to myself, "How can anyone really believe that Adam and Eve were real historic persons?" I was an evolutionist at the time. Today I am convinced that the Genesis record is

on the very day the he ate the forbidden fruit.

It is interesting to note that Adam did not die physically on the day he sinned. We are told in Genesis 5:5 that Adam lived many, many more years after his act of sinful disobedience. We are also told that physical death was part of God's curse upon man because of sin: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).<sup>10</sup>

So when God promised Adam that he would die on the very day that he ate the fruit, what did He mean? In what way did Adam die? He did not die physically when he sinned, but he died in some other way.

It is important to understand that DEATH involves *separation*. When a person dies physically the soul is separated from the body—that is, the soul departs from the body. Those of you who have stood by the open coffin of a friend or loved one realize that although the lifeless body remains, the person is gone. All the physical cells are still there, but there is no animation, no life. "The body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26).

---

completely accurate. Indeed the historicity of Adam and Eve is authenticated by Christ Himself (see Matthew 19:4-6).

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Crabtree of Winnsboro, Texas explains that little Johnny was in his bedroom playing with his toy tractor when his mother walked in. "Mom, doesn't it say in the Bible that man was made out of dust?" he asked. "Yes," replied his mom. "Is it also true that when we die, we go back to dust?" he inquired. "Yes," said his mom again. "Why do you ask?" "Because I was looking under the bed," Johnny answered, "and there's someone under there either coming or going." (*Country Magazine*, Feb/March, 2001, p.42).

When Adam disobeyed God, he did not drop dead physically. He continued to breathe; his heart continued to beat and all vital signs were fine. But spiritually a drastic change had taken place with respect to His relationship to God. When he sinned he was *separated* from God in the sense that he no longer enjoyed God's fellowship and approval. He was now guilty and ashamed and unable to enjoy the relationship with God that he once had. Those who study the Bible often speak of this as "spiritual death." Because of man's sin it is impossible for him to have the spiritual relationship to God that he was meant to have.

## What is Spiritual Life?

If spiritual death is separation from God in the sense of not being able to have a right kind of relationship to God, then spiritual life is when a person is able to enjoy a right kind of relationship and fellowship with His Creator. The Lord Jesus spoke of this in John 17:3—"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." The person who has (spiritual) life is the person who KNOWS the only true God. You see, Christianity is not so much *doing something* as it is *knowing Somone!* It involves a real and right personal relationship with the only true God: to know Him, to enjoy Him, to fellowship with Him, to please Him, to talk to Him, to love Him, etc.

## Man's Dilemma

Because of sin man is spiritually dead. The Bible describes people as being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1,5). Such people are certainly alive physically—they walk and talk, laugh and cry and show all the signs of physical life. But spiritually they are separated from God, being "alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18). They are lost (Luke 19:10; Isaiah 53:6) and not fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. Man was created to know God and to enjoy Him forever by way of a



personal relationship. Sin cuts off this relationship and alienates the person from God.

God is perfectly holy and righteous and cannot have fellowship with those who are wicked and defiled by sin. “But your iniquities have **separated** between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Death always involves separation and man is separated from a holy God because of sin. Man’s problem—first and foremost—is a heart problem. Jesus said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

If I am honest with myself I will admit that I have done evil and have come short of God’s righteous requirements: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Sin separates us from a holy God.

Because of our sins, there is a penalty involved. It is the death penalty: “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). “Sin. . .brings forth death” (James 1:15). Because of our sin we have earned for ourselves death. And this death penalty must be paid. God in His perfect and holy justice must punish sin.

What is this death penalty? It is far more than mere physical death. We have already seen that death signifies *separation from God*. The Bible speaks of an eternal death, called “the second death” which involves eternal separation from God and eternal punishment by God: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: **which is the second death**” (Revelation 21:8). “And death and hell were cast into the lake of

fire. **This is the second death**. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15). “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . .And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:41,46).<sup>11</sup>

Though the concept of eternal punishment (Hell) is not in vogue today, yet it is a reality which the Lord Jesus spoke of often, and we must not ignore His warnings. He died to save us from the wrath to come.

## God’s Remedy

Let’s review:

*All have sinned* (Romans 3:23).

*The penalty of sin is death* (Romans 6:23).

[This death involves eternal separation from God and punishment by God.]

*The penalty must be paid*. God cannot and will not overlook sin.

---

<sup>11</sup> These verses on eternal punishment and eternal death are very severe and very sobering. It is a fact of Scripture that the Lord Jesus had more to say about Hell and eternal punishment than did any other person in the Bible. It is terribly unwise to deny these realities. The reason we have a problem with such subjects is that we fail to really understand the terribleness of sin and the awesomeness of God’s holiness. What we really need to understand is all that God has done, through Christ, to deliver us from so great a death.

Someone has said it this way:

Life is short;  
Death is sure;  
Sin the cause;  
Christ the cure!

God has provided a remedy, a cure, and it is found in the Person of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

### Salvation by Substitution

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3). “For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who (Christ) knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The heart of the gospel is that the sinless Saviour died in our place. He took upon Himself the death penalty which we deserve. He died as our Substitute, and suffered the wrath and anger and punishment of Almighty God, all of which should have been targeted at us. We are the guilty ones, but the Saviour took our place and paid the price in full. He died, instead of us, that we might live.

Three days following His death on our behalf He rose again from the dead and is alive forevermore. He is able to save all those who come to the Father through Him (Hebrews 7:25; John 14:6). The Father is fully satisfied that His Son has accomplished everything necessary for sinful men to be reconciled to Himself. The SIN problem has been solved!

## What Must a Person Do?

The Gospel of John was written so that men, women, boys and girls might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have eternal life through His Name (John 20:31). Again and again in the Gospel of John we are told that there is but one thing that the sinner must do to be saved. He must **BELIEVE** on Jesus Christ. Read the following verses for yourself: John 1:12; 3:15-16; 3:18; 3:36; 5:24; 6:35; 6:47; 11:25-26; etc. See also Acts 16:30-31.

Friend, salvation is not obtained by good works or religious observances (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). It is not what we do that counts; it is what Christ HAS DONE that counts. If we could save ourselves we would not need a Saviour. We need to recognize our hopeless and helpless condition, and flee to a Saviour who offers eternal hope and infinite help.

“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and [let him return] to our God; for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved . . . For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:9,13).

### A Suggested Prayer

If you have come to see your need for Jesus Christ and the salvation which He offers, then you need to come to Christ and receive Him as your personal Saviour. In your own words, and from the depth of your heart, you need to pray along these lines (before praying you might want to read John 1:12; John 3:16 and

Revelation 3:20):

“Dear God, I know that I have sinned against You and have broken Your laws and have lived wickedly. I recognize that I am a lost sinner and that I deserve God’s judgment and wrath. I am worthy of hell. Lord, I also believe that You loved me and sent Your Son to die on the cross for me and to pay the full penalty for my sins. I believe that He died as My Substitute and that He rose again from the dead to be my living Lord and Saviour. I now gladly receive Jesus Christ as my Saviour. Lord Jesus save me and forgive all my sins and give me Your gift of eternal life. Help me to live for you all the rest of my days on this earth. Thank you for saving my soul and making me whole. In Christ’s Name, Amen.”

Friend, if you have trusted Jesus Christ, please contact us and we would be happy to answer any questions you might have and also send you some study sheets to help you grow in your Christian life. We hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you for considering these important matters.<sup>12</sup>

George Zeller (Nov. 2001)

\*\*\*\*\*

## What Lies Beyond the Grave For the Saved Person?

*The following verses of Scripture reveal what lies beyond the grave for the person who has believed on Christ:*

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:21,23).

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).

“Let not your heart 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” (John 14:1-2).

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:3-4).

---

<sup>12</sup> This paper was originally written for a close relative who was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

## What Lies Beyond the Grave For the Unsaved Person?

*The following verses of Scripture reveal what lies beyond the grave for the person who has **not** believed on Christ:*

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels . . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:41,46).

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21).

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

“And in hell [Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments [torture]” (Luke 16:23).

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

## The Eternal Destiny Of Both Believers and Unbelievers

*The following verses of Scripture reveal the eternal destiny of both groups:*

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:17-18).

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12).

## The Middletown Bible Church

349 East Street

Middletown, CT 06457

(860) 346-0907

A Complete Literature List is Available Upon Request

[www.middletownbiblechurch.org](http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org)