

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

PART VII



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Question #16 - *“Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death? Then Jesus comes at the end of time and takes the soul home to heaven.”*

In our last segment, we discussed the heart of the question in talking about the possibilities of where we could go upon death. We also covered the truth of exactly where we do go! Now, more about how the resurrection happens, why it happens, how some false teachings in the church can confuse our understanding of what happens, along with a few other things that go hand in hand with all this, is what we are going to discuss in this final segment of “A Matter Of Life And Death.”

To really put the issue of death, where we go, and why, all together, we need to be clear on two facts. First, we should realize the Scripture tells us there are two resurrections. Second, the Scripture tells us there are two deaths. In talking about the sacrifice Christ made for all of us, Hebrews 9:27-28 tells us, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The death which man is appointed to face is the one God warned Adam and

Eve we would surely be deserving of the very day we chose to take on the knowledge of good and evil. After man's fall into sin, the judgment of death was placed upon us all whether we desired to serve God or not. However, because there are those who still desire to serve God, after we face that death, all will be judged. This is how we end up with two resurrections and why there must be two deaths!

The first resurrection is the one we just covered. It will gather all those who have served God, from all previous and current generations, unto Jesus, to that point in the time sequence where Jesus returns. Make no mistake about it, those who take part in this resurrection will do so only by the judgment of God, because only God can judge who has truly served Him and who has not. (I Sam. 16:7) Now again, the place Jesus went to prepare for us will not be ours until after the Day of Judgment, and God could resurrect us all at that point. However, the Bible makes it very clear, those who seek to serve The Lord, who have lived prior to the Second Coming of Christ, will do some more living here, before Judgment Day!

For God it is simple. He can put us back into the time sequence which exists here, at any point He desires. A man such as Lazarus was put back into the time sequence just days after he had left it. He did not really live those days, he just jumped over them and came back into the time sequence at the command of Jesus. With the exception that Lazarus was returned to the same body he had previously lived in, this is not too dissimilar than will be the case for all those who will take part in the first resurrection. The point we need to understand is, there has to be a very good reason for God to put us back in this time sequence. In Lazarus' case it was to glorify Jesus and show God has this kind of power. The reason those who are part of the first resurrection will be resurrected is because God desires to use them in furthering exactly what Jesus told us we should pray for all the time. “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:9-10

The reason for re-entering the time line will be to rule and reign with Christ on this earth. The

reasons for doing this could fill a whole other book, but in truth, it has to do with all the same things we have been talking about. Because of man's free will and the fact God does not simply reach down and change the way we were created to live, God is working with man day by day in this time and physical creation He put us in. He is also working with us in the ways and mode we have chosen to build in this time and physical creation.

Now, the second resurrection will not come until right at the end of the world. This is done so that everyone from every generation who has ever lived can stand before God for judgment. (Rev. 20:10-15) None of those, throughout all generations and times, who have rejected God in their lives, will be reinserted into this time sequence. There is simply no point in it! There will also be no point in generally reinserting even those who have desired God, out of those who have lived after the first resurrection took place. Those humans who make the choice to serve God, after the first resurrection has taken place, will die in the way we all die now. Upon death, all those who were not judged worthy to be a part of the first resurrection, along with all who have lived after the first resurrection, will simply jump to the second resurrection, where we will all stand before God for judgment!

All those who were part of the first resurrection will also come to this point and place. However, this will not be because they died and jumped forward to it. Because they will never die again, they will simply arrive at the Day of Judgment by following Christ. The beauty of being part of the first resurrection will be that you already know what you will be told on Judgment Day as to where you will spend eternity. This will be true, because you have already been redeemed! "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,..." Revelation 20:6 If you are part of the first resurrection, you will, on Judgment Day, be welcomed into that place Jesus went to prepare for all those who desire Him, along with all those who lived after the first resurrection who were also judged worthy on that day!

The second death will be the final judgment of God placed upon all those who have not desired Him

and the life He prepared for all humans from the foundation of the world. This is because those who do not want or care for the things of God, cannot be allowed to affect the place where those who desire God go for eternity. This is for two main reasons. The first reason is a point which will be proven during the reign of Christ on this earth. Revelation records that even after a thousand years of having no devil to tempt them, and having the perfect administration of God, using the very systems of government leadership which man chooses to set his life under, man will desire to have God out of the picture. (Rev. 20:7-9) If these kinds of individuals were allowed into the place Jesus is preparing, there would be no point in going there! In not caring for the things of God, they would make the new place much like this place; and without death, we would all be stuck with what that created for eternity. This would be diametrically opposed to why God separated us from the Tree of Life here!

The second reason God can not allow these individuals into heaven is the simple fact it would be a violation of our free will for God to automatically take us to that new place, when we have shown we do not care to be a part of the purpose it is created for. The way we are told those not in The Lamb's Book of Life will be informed they are not going to be welcomed into the place Jesus is preparing is with the words from God, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:23 Many people do not understand, the purpose of this new place is not just so we may live forever in comfort. The true purpose is to live in the presence of God, and by His will! If God took even all "good people" to heaven, it would be God forcing Himself on us. By allowing us to live in the here and now - especially in the freedom He allows - God has proven, forcing Himself on us is something He does not desire and He will not do! If you did not care enough in this life to sacrifice the little pleasure sin can bring for a season, for the sake of serving God and His righteousness, (Heb. 11:24-26) God is not going to force you into doing it for eternity.

Remember, it does not matter if you desire to serve God or not, your physical form will die, but your mind and spirit will not. The problem is that by the Day of Judgment, those who do not desire God

cannot even hope to be like Jack with his lantern, even if it were previously possible. All humans will be at the Day of Judgment, because all possibilities for the survival of this time sequence and the physical world which it runs on will have been exhausted. Because of this, everything here will simply cease to exist. (Rev. 21:1) While those who serve God will be granted eternal life by having their bodies replaced with an eternal form and welcomed into a place where God's original purpose for humans can be fulfilled, those who do not desire God will be left without a body. They will also be cast into a place which was originally prepared for the devil and those angels who followed him. (Matt. 25:31-46) This will be the second death; and to be quite literal, this state of existence will truly be hell!

Now, because we live on this side of the first resurrection, it is only prudent that we take a look at a couple more things about the first resurrection, before we close this study. In going back to what Paul said, we know that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:..." I Thessalonians 4:16 Simply put, the time of the resurrection for those who serve The Lord and desire His purpose is that moment of Jesus' Second Coming to this earth. This brings us to yet another very bad, false teaching in the church!

Because it confuses so many people, it really saddens me that so many ministers propagate the false doctrine of a rapture! First, we can point out the word "rapture" is never used in the Bible. This, in and of itself, does not make the teaching wrong. However, we should be clear, this term is used specifically to separate the event of Jesus' literal coming a second time to set His feet on this world, from the events Paul is describing about the first resurrection. If these two events are separate, Jesus never told us about it. Jesus only speaks of His return! The book of Revelation warns those who would add to the book! Teaching Christ's Second Coming is nothing more than a time in which He will catch away all those who have served Him, without ever doing what the Bible tells us Jesus is coming back to do on this earth, leaves only one logical conclusion, and that is the idea that Jesus,

coming back to set His feet on this world, is His third coming. This is definitely adding to the Bible!

I bring this up because it affects our question. Again, there are only the three places we can reside. Jesus went to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also. He is coming back to receive all those who have and do serve Him, unto Himself. If you teach there is a moment where Jesus comes back and "raptures" His children away before His actual return to this earth, you are opening an entirely new theology! Unless you believe the dead are in some way still living among us, why would the dead in Christ need to be raptured? They're already gone from this world. Why would they not simply go to the point where Christ actually does return? If you believe between the rapture and the "third" coming of Christ that humans go to that place Jesus went to prepare for us, which is our true eternal heaven, you have to believe people can go there without having to stand before God The Father on Judgment Day and have their name read from The Lamb's Book of Life. In doing this, you are also teaching that people go to heaven, and later get sent back to rule and reign with Christ on this earth, only to be welcomed back to that same place on Judgment Day. Does that sound like a philosophy supported by the Word?

Jesus told the man on the cross next to Him, that very day the man would be with Jesus in paradise. If you do not believe people go to the actual place Jesus is preparing eternally for us, then you must believe there is a holding place of some sort. If you believe the dead in Christ go to some holding place after death, which is just for them and a good place to be, do all those who are part of the first resurrection simply return to that holding place after the resurrection, or is there yet another place? If such places exist, why did Jesus have to leave in order to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also? I suppose there are those who believe they have answers which can be used to somewhat satisfy these questions. However, in truth, the only reason to try and answer them at all is because you want the "rapture" idea to be true, and what is really sad about all this is the fundamental reason people want this theory to be true. Simply put, it is because they just can't bring themselves to believe and trust

in The Lord for their life and needs during whatever tribulation occurs before the Second Coming of The Lord!

Some would argue this is not what they are doing because of yet another false teaching Christians hold to, which is the idea there is a “tribulation” with a set time period, where God Himself beats up on His creation, and thus, man. Many people argue the reason for the “rapture” is that God would not put His children through His wrath. However, the Bible does not support this theory of a “tribulation” engineered by God, any more than it does a “rapture.” In fact, it is in direct contradiction to what we are told. We should all be clear on the fact that first and foremost God does not want us to have a focus on the here and now, which is something we have trouble with; thus, God cursed the ground. However, God does not desire to harm His creation. God wants us to be saved, which means we will get to go to a place after we have left this world which does not have suffering. As we just covered, suffering will not be there because those who desire sin will not be allowed in. What we must keep in mind is, that's not the case in the here and now. In the here and now, people can do what they want. Again, that is God giving us a free will. It's sin which brings such tremendous suffering, and that is why the here and now has a limit as to how far God will allow it all to go before He steps in and does something about it. This is the mercy and grace which God's righteousness demands!

We see that limit at the time of Noah, and that is why God sent the flood. However, once that was done, God directly told man He would not continue to deal with the limit by destroying all life as He had done with the flood. (Gen. 9:11) In the Word, we are given what was, at that same time, God's full determination on the issue. That determination was not just that He would never again use a flood to destroy all life, or that He would simply never again destroy all life, all at once, as He had done with the flood; but that, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and

heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” Genesis 8:21-22

In this statement, not only does God tell us He will not continue to curse the ground for man's sake, God specifically promises He will not allow the destruction of men - or any other force for that matter - to make this planet completely unlivable. Man can have his free will, God will not continue to curse, or in other words harm, His creation in order to get man's attention; but as long as God allows this universe to stand, God's assurance is that this world will never become a place life has to abandon. Thus, we do not see a flood like, catastrophic, physical event ever again in the Word of God. Instead, what we see is God's continual intervention to keep us from going to the limit which would force Him to end it all as He did in Noah's day. One of the final and most drastic of these measures which God will use is the return of His Son, to directly rule and reign over the world. However, God will not take this kind of drastic intervention step until He has allowed man to prove there is no other way. This is what we see in the vials being poured out in Revelation.

II Peter 3:9 points out, some people count slackness, but God is not slack concerning His promises. God is waiting and gauging the destruction of man on this planet. Sure, Revelation talks about man blaspheming God for the “plagues,” but man always does this. The fact blaming and being mad at God is man's fall-back position for everything is why God told us, in the third commandment, not to take the name of The Lord our God in vain. (Ex. 20:7) Simply put, man and his actions will cause the time of great tribulation we are seeing and will continue to see leading up to the Second Coming of Christ. When man has pushed it so far God can no longer wait and still keep His promise that this world will remain habitable, He will act! “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.” Revelation 16:15-17

I could write another book on these issues, but the truth is, the Bible's words just don't come together when you believe in things such as a rapture, and a God engineered tribulation. God is not going to, one day, gather up all those who have served Him - both those who are currently alive, along with those who are already outside this world and its suffering - so He can take seven years, or the like, to beat-up on the world! God's wrath on a world filled with sin is His inaction far more than it is His action! We see this all through the Bible. In Revelation we see an illustration much like the parables Jesus gave us, which shows those who have been martyred for the sake of the gospel, asking God how long it will be until their blood is avenged, and you know what they were told? They were told to wait until those brothers and sisters in Christ, still on this earth, are also killed like they were. (Rev. 6:9-11)

God allows us our freedom; and in doing so, He does not step in at all moments and save us from the suffering our sinful choices and the sinful choices of others create. God will allow man to tear this planet apart and kill each other, for a time, in order to give man the opportunity to open his eyes and see the foolishness of his own ways. However, when enough is enough - which the vials of Revelation demonstrate to us God is calculating - there will be an intervention by God, just as there was when things began to become hopeless in the days of Noah. However, instead of calling a man to build an ark and prepare for a flood, which God said He would never do again, this time the intervention will be the return of The Man, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Jesus said in Matthew 24:37, " But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Jesus goes on in those verses to reiterate the point: God did not take Noah out before the flood, and the world was not being crushed by God's hand. People were eating and drinking, marrying and going on with their lives as if life had no end, even right up to the day the limit was truly reached, which was the day Noah entered the ark. Through it all, Noah had to endure whatever the world threw at him until the day God closed the door of that ark. (Gen. 7:11-16) Others could have come in the ark, but like the virgins who did not have the oil for their lamps, and the rich man who did not care to pay

attention, while in life, to anything other than his riches, no one in Noah's day cared either.

Jesus is not bringing flood water, nor is God going to beat up on the planet for man's sake. To believe what we see in Revelation about the grass, trees, water, and the like, being burned, dying and poisonous are God's actions, is to call God a liar! God will deal with this world and its sin. He is already doing it through death, and He will ultimately do it by bringing this temporal universe to an end, and by separating those who desire Him from those who do not. In the meantime, God will continue to do what He does based on His true will, and that will is that none perish and all come to repentance which will lead to their salvation. (II Pet. 3:7-9) That is what God is working toward, and that is why Jesus will return to this world to rule and reign for a time before the end! Believing God is going to take vengeance on this world just before the return of Christ, instead of believing God is allowing man his free will in hopes man will repent of his ways, is to blame and blaspheme God in the same way evil men always do!

We need to understand, Jesus will not come as a humble child the second time, for He has already done that and the world has already shown what it will do with it! This second time, He will return in power and as the rightful King of Kings, and Lord of Lords of this entire world! In Revelation 11:15, we are told when that seventh trumpet shall sound - which is the last one to sound - the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His reign as supreme King over humanity will never end. This will lead us to the Day of Judgment!

It is for the purpose of ruling and reigning with Him that Jesus will gather unto Himself all those, both dead and alive, who have desired to serve Him. (Rev. 20:6) God will reverse the suffering man brings by and through man's inability and lack of righteousness to lead this world. With Jesus as its head, God will put into place a world-governing system supported by people who cannot be bribed, threatened, coerced, or the like. Those who return with Jesus will not be able to be killed or injured by anyone, including those who would try to, in order to get away with wrong doing. Those who have been



resurrected by Christ will have no reason to take orders from anyone but The One they have longed to serve, and maybe even given their lives in doing so, once already! This resurrection, for this purpose, is where those who love God and are called according to His purpose go after death. When man chooses to rebel against even this perfectly administered world of peace, the devil will be loosed again to orchestrate the final steps which will prove all possibilities of saving this world have been exhausted, and God will bring this entire universe's existence to a close. (Rev. 20:7-21:1) The rest of the dead will not be seen again until that day we all stand before God to be judged!

Those who attempt to serve The Lord, with all their heart, already see the truth of great tribulation in our world right now. Sadly, the fact so many Christians have been taught Jesus will come and take them out of all this is one of the reasons people are having and will have trouble enduring to the end. (Rev. 2:10) However, the information we have covered in this writing should be a comfort to us all, because while we all walk this earth and suffer from the sin of man, we should be reassured a fresh and a new, this life is not what we are living for! Jesus told us not to worry when people persecuted us and killed us, for so they did to those who have served God in all time periods before us. (Matt. 5:11-12) Sure, it isn't easy to live in these days of sin, with its sickness and destruction, but that is why God is ultimately taking us out of this place, and will welcome all those who truly desire Him, into a new place which Revelation describes for us!

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22:1-5

As I have said a couple of times before, there is much more I could write, but I feel I have written enough for this particular study. It is my prayer this writing has been a blessing to everyone who has taken the time to read it, and, at the very least, that it has caused us all to go back again and study God's Word for ourselves! That is what we must do. We must study to show ourselves approved. (II Tim. 2:15) If you don't believe or agree with what I have written, that's alright; because just as with any man, you should not simply take my word for it anyway. People believing in man's philosophies instead of knowing the Word for themselves is what has caused so much of the confusion which exists in the church today. What each of you should do is take what I have said and hold it up to the light of God's Word! In doing that, I believe you will find your questions answered in a way they never have been before. It's for this simple reason that I feel in my heart there is no better way to close this writing than to do it by quoting the full wording of a scripture we have already covered, but which was Paul's simple answer to the question we have been dealing with here!

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” I Thessalonians 4:13-18