

Life After Death – Part 2: No Eye Has Seen

1. Review why I am doing this series – because so many folks in our congregation have lost a loved one in recent months, and I have overheard some strange beliefs about the afterlife during the wakes. I want to address those beliefs and challenge them with what the bible says about the afterlife.
 - a. In Job. 14:14 he asks, "*If a man dies, shall he live again?*" "
 - b. There is a story of a man went on vacation to the Holy Land with his wife and her mother. While in Israel, the mother-in-law died from a heart attack. The couple went to a local undertaker, who explained that they could either ship the body home which would cost more than \$1500, or they could bury her right there in the Holy Land for only \$150. The man said, "We'll ship her home. "Surprised, the undertaker responded, "Are you sure? That's an awfully big expense, and we can do a very nice burial here. "The man said, "Look, 2000 years ago they buried a guy here and three days later He rose from the dead. I just can't take that chance."
2. **The truth is, there is life after death.** This body we have is mortal, but we have an immortal soul that will live forever.
 - a. That soul is comprised of our thoughts, our will and our emotions. It includes our personality and our character.
 - b. When we die, that soul, filled with our memories, our emotions, our developed personality and etched character does not evaporate and die, but lives on.
 - c. In Matthew 10:28 (NLT) Jesus tells his disciples, "*Don't be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*"
 - i. This passage supports the concept of the immortality of the soul.
 - ii. Man cannot touch your soul, its destiny lies in God's hands alone!
 - d. **We will all "survive" the physical death of our bodies.**
 - i. That is a hard concept to face for some. Because one minute after death we will be in heaven or hell. Our soul will survive to live somewhere for eternity.

Let's look at a few key facts about what will be our state of existence after our physical death:

3. **After death, we will experience a real consciousness.**
 - a. You will be aware of your circumstance and the state you are in. Your soul will be aware and cognitive of its surroundings.
 - b. There are some cults including Jehovah's Witnesses, Spiritualists and others who claim that after the death of the body, the soul becomes unconscious or asleep.
 - c. But Jesus told the thief on the cross beside Him, who believed in Him. "*Today you will be with me in Paradise.*" (Lk. 23:43). When that thief died, he found himself in God's glorious presence.
 - i. Some others may say, "When you are dead, that's it. There is no more. There is nothing afterwards. There is no eternal consciousness or existence."
 - ii. But the first clear thing you will notice—whether, God forbid, you die in an accident or in a hospital bed—when you have taken your last breath—the first thing you will notice is...**it isn't over!**
 - iii. Pity the man or the woman who reaches for a gun or a razor blade and says, "I can't take it anymore. I just want to end it all!"
 1. You don't end your existence by taking your life! How many people will be shocked, when they "open their eyes" on the other side and find out it is real?
 - iv. When the rich man and the beggar Lazarus die, their bodies are in the grave and yet they are fully aware of their existence, suffering and relief.

4. There Are Two Distinct Worlds After Death.

- a. There are two distinct and separate worlds after death. The rich man and the beggar Lazarus which I just mentioned (from Luke 16:23-26) were in different places. **There is not a third place called purgatory.**
 - i. The doctrine of purgatory, which is not found in the bible, says that we must pay for any sins committed after baptism and have them purged by fire.
- b. The bible says that the blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleans us from ALL SIN, not just some
 - i. 1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
 - ii. Keep in mind that we are not forgiven by our deeds or by our own suffering; but by the suffering of Jesus Christ. *(AMEN?)
 - iii. There is nothing you could ever do that could pay for even a single sin you have committed.
 1. The penalty for one sin, one transgression is eternity, not purgatory.
 2. Thank God that Jesus has paid all my debt and not just some of it.
- c. Being as there are two worlds after death, our entrance into one of these two worlds will be instantaneous.
 - i. We must understand that this transport into the afterlife is immediate – those who have served Jesus Christ go to the presence of God –
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 5:10 - *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

5. After death will come the resurrection of the living and the dead.

- a. What does that mean to you? It is found in the Nicene Creed, the earliest creed adopted by the church which stated the basic tenets of the Christian faith.
- b. I really doubt that many of us in this room have any grasp of what the “resurrection of the living and the dead” means.
 - i. At first glance, it sounds like it means that when Jesus returns, that those who died will be resurrected and those who are living get a brand new body as well. That is the way I would expect an evangelical church to interpret it with our understanding of end-time events.
 - ii. But that view is theologically flawed.
 - iii. The bible makes clear that there will be Two Resurrections. There will be a resurrection of the living (those who belong to Christ) and a resurrection of the dead (those who have rejected Christ).
 - iv. John 5:28-29. *“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”*
 - v. Daniel 12:2 *“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”*
 - vi. *“There shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked”*. -- Acts 24:15
- c. Both the saved and the condemned will participate in the resurrection of the dead, which will include a brand new body. The tragic part is that the condemned will have this body and will experience pain and torment for eternity in it. Jesus didn't mince words when he said *“where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched”* to describe the torment of those who reject God's love

6. We will have brand new, resurrection bodies in which to interact with our eternal environment.

- a. I love the words that Job recorded in Job 19:23-27 to describe his hope in the resurrection: *“Oh, that my words could be written. Oh, that they could be inscribed on a monument, carved with an*

iron chisel and filled with lead, engraved forever in the rock. "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!

- i. In Job's own words, he sees his body will have been decayed, yet "in my body" and "with my own eyes" "I will see God!"
- ii. This is a declaration of the wonderful truth that He will not only have a new body, but it will bear resemblance to the body that decayed and rotted away here on earth.
- iii. It also declares one of the primary purposes of the "resurrection" body is to interact with God Himself.
 1. *"The body is...for the Lord and the Lord for the body."* (1 Cor 6:13).

7. So what does that new body look like? What do we call it? How is it raised if our existing body was cremated or became ashes of the earth, chum for sharks or gel in the ground? Paul answers this question in 1 Cor. 15:

- a. *But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.* {1 Cor 15:35-38 RSV}
- b. I am surprised at Paul's bluntness, "You foolish man" but Paul sees this as a silly question because God has already provided the answer in nature for us to observe.
 - i. The body that emerges from a seed that dies is different from the one that was planted.
 - ii. A gardener puts a tomato seed into the ground and what comes up? Another tomato seed? No! What comes up is a green stem which does not look at all like what you put into the ground. Nevertheless it is tied to it; it is continuous from it; it has an identity with it.
 - iii. There is an undeniable tie with that which you put into the ground, and yet it is not the same; it is the "same" without being similar. The bible calls this a glorified body or state.
- c. *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.* {1 Cor 15:42-43a RSV}
 - i. The Risen Lord is in a glorified state, but His body is the very same body that was crucified and died a true death.
 1. He showed Thomas the holes in His hands and feet, and Thomas touched the lesion in His side where the lance had penetrated. His resurrection body bore the scars of this life.
 - ii. What is it about you and me that is dishonorable? Well, it is the body, isn't it? Let me tell you a secret about mine: It sags; it groans; it even smells. When it dies it will become foul, loathsome. But it will be raised, Paul says, in glory. It will be clean, sweet, fragrant, eternally fresh, and able to function in a marvelous way.
 1. *It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.* {1 Cor 15:43b RSV}
 2. Isn't it amazing how we boast about our strength as human beings, yet just a tiny, invisible microbe can carry us away and end it all? A gnat so small you can hardly see can choke you to death. Human life is really very fragile and very easily ended.
 3. What you see here on earth, walking around before you, is a body that is suited to my soul for this environment. It is designed to function by the control of my soul -- my mind, my emotions, my will. I like to think of it as a kind of an "earth suit" designed for time, a "time suit" that I live in.
 - a. It is not me. I live in it. And that is what your body is. I am standing up here wiggling the lips of my "earth suit," and you hear sounds coming out of it.

- b. You say that is me speaking to you. Well, yes, you are right. Behind the "earth suit" is me. I could not talk to you without it, but the "earth suit" is designed only for this life. It is not designed for anything else.
 - c. It works fairly well in this life, but something could happen to this "earth suit" while I am talking to you and I would fall over and somebody would walk up here and say, "He's dead!"
 - i. But it would not be so. I would not be dead.
 - ii. The "earth suit" would have died, but I would be as alive as I have ever been, and already enjoying the new body, the "heaven suit," the "eternity suit."
 - d. *It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.* {1 Cor 15:44a RSV}
 - i. Paul tells us that we will receive a body designed for eternity, and that there is a definite link between the body designed for time and the body designed for eternity. My body that was a physical body will be raised as a spiritual body suited perfectly for eternity.
 - ii. Our physical body is suited to this world and interacts with this world with five senses. Our current body is designed to be primarily preoccupied with the physical world, whereas our new body will be designed to be occupied with God and the spiritual world.
 - iii. For those who are alive when Jesus returns, we will be clothed with our resurrection body in an instant, without experiencing physical death, we will be instantly transformed, metamorphasized, putting on immortality over mortality.
8. **Your resurrection body will have the same characteristics as Jesus' post resurrection body.**
- a. He rose from the dead, and yet upon his body still were the marks of crucifixion by which his apostles could be absolutely sure that it was the same Jesus in the same body.
 - i. And yet what a difference!
 - ii. His body had been glorified, transformed.
 - iii. It was functioning at a different dimension and level of existence.
 - iv. It was able to pass through doors, able to appear and disappear, to eat or not to eat.
 - v. It was able to function in fellowship with people in their "earth suits" and yet it was able to disappear from the earthly scene and still function in an "eternity suit," a "heaven suit" that God had provided for him.
 - vi. *"it does not yet appear what we shall be. [The sons of God do not look any different than anybody else, do they?] But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* {1 Jn 3:2 RSV}
 - b. There is one more thing that I need to touch on to encourage you concerning the resurrection body. That is the subject of "heavenly recognition."
 - i. **We will recognize people and relatives and friends in heaven.** Just as the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah (who they had never seen before) on the mount of Transfiguration, so we will recognize one another.
9. Closing:
- a. 1 Cor 2:9 *"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."*