



## ***The Beginning of Life is Great...The Ending of Life is Greater!***

### ***Lesson 4***

**Who can make this statement and be sure of it?**

**What does the Bible tell us about the beginning of life and the end of life?**

**We have questions...with all kind of answers...from skeptics, heretics, and “pathetics”... to philosophers, doctors, and pastors!**

**HOWEVER...**

**The Bible answers all the questions! Please Note:**

- (1) The answers might not be what one would want to hear.
- (2) The answers might not be specific and detailed.

***Scriptures: Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die,”***

***Hebrews 9:27, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”***

***Conclusion: Every man, woman, boy or girl will die! This is according to Scripture.***

***But, wait...we are talking about the flesh, the body, the casing, the tent, the “earth suit”...not the soul and spirit!***

***To the Christian who has heard and studied the Word...This is elementary truth! Solid truth...but, never the less...elementary information in which we have heard over and over in our Christian life many times.***

***Yet...we find that hearing about it, talking about it, experiencing it with loved ones, etc. is not what we enjoy hearing, not what we jump with joy in being a part of it.***

***Another conclusion: Death is certain...but, we would rather talk about the living aspect of our lives.***

***What part of living do you like?***

***Does it thrill you to experience living in this world of ours?***

***Pessimist vs. Optimist***

***“Life is meaningless” or “Life is a Journey which will never end.”***

***“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21).***

***If I were to ask what word you associate with the word “death,” and if you were not familiar with Philippians 1:21, I venture to say that the word “gain” would not come to mind.***

**We (normally, humanly speaking) think of death as:**

- A terrible loss, not a gain.
- Merciful = If the person was suffering a great deal, the person is released from their pain. We probably have said, “Death was merciful; he/she was released from their pain.”
- Tragic = This is the normal thought...we go to great effort and expense to hang on to life for as long as possible. I.e. Insurance; doctor’s offices, seeking medical help and even prescription drugs to keep us alive.

**We live in a time when there is great fascination about life after death. Why this fascination with the world beyond the grave? Is it not because death is so final?**

**When you finally cross the line in death...there is no coming back from the other side. Death wins the battle every time.**

*“After the doctors have tried the latest wonder drug, after the best minds have pooled their wisdom, after the philosophers have done their best to explain that death is only a natural part of life, we come face to face with the ugly reality that someday we will all die. And that death—whether planned or accidental, whether comfortable or painful—will be the end of life as we have known it.”* Ray Pritchard, *Keep Believing Ministries*

***Yes...this is a “downer”...a “let’s talk about something else” subject!***

***However, we will not let this outlook be a gloomy one. I told you I would never end a lesson on a “pessimistic” and “negative” note.***

**So, let's look at some questions people have concerning death:**

**(1) What happens when we die?**

**If we want the answer in one sentence here it is: What happens after we die depends on what happens before we die.** Consider what the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (NKJV). This is an appointment no one will miss. As someone has noted, the statistics on death are appalling. One hundred out of one hundred people will eventually die. We are all terminally ill with a disease called death; we just don't know when the end will come.

**(2) Is There a "Second Chance" after Death?**

This is the popular view of many people who hope that those who did not accept Christ in this life will somehow have a second chance after death—either in the afterlife or perhaps through reincarnation. Let no one be mistaken on this point. The only opportunity we will ever have to get right with God is the opportunity God affords us right now. If we dream of coming to God after we die, we are nursing a vain hope.

**(3) What Happens to Children Who Die?**

This is obviously a very tender subject to many people. Parents want to know: Will I see my child again? I believe that God's grace credits children with the merits of Jesus' blood and righteousness so that children who die before they are old enough to believe are covered by His blood, and their entrance into heaven is made sure and certain. Thus they are saved by grace exactly as we are.

**(4) Can We Contact the Dead after They Are Gone?**

The answer is "NO." Any attempt to dabble in spirit contact is strictly forbidden in the Bible. It is sometimes called sorcery or dealing with familiar spirits. **DON'T DABBLE IN "DEMONIC" STUFF.**

**(5) What Do You Say to Someone Who Has Lost a Loved One?**

It really doesn't matter what you say in terms of the precise words. Those who are grieving will not remember the words you say, but they will never forget that you cared enough to be there when they needed you. If you go with God's love in your heart, His Holy Spirit will give you any words you need to say. That means we don't need to answer questions only God can answer.

**(6) What Happens at the Moment of Death**

As mentioned previously, what happens when you die depends on what happens before you die. The Bible classifies the whole human race into two broad categories—the saved and the lost. The saved are those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The lost are those who haven't.

**For the Lost**

- **The lost fear death and with good reason.** Job 18:14 calls death "the king of terrors." Hebrews 2:14 reminds us that the devil holds people in

bondage through the fear of death. And 1 Corinthians 15:26 calls death “the last enemy.”

- **At the moment of death, the body is buried in the grave while the soul enters a new realm.** For the unbeliever, death begins an experience of unending conscious punishment.

**We can summarize the fate of the lost in four short statements:**

**1. At the moment of death the soul of the lost is sent to hell where it is in conscious torment.** In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus told of a rich man who upon his death went to hell and suffered in the flames of torment. It does not matter whether you think this passage is literal or figurative. If you say it is literal, then it must be a terrible punishment. If it is figurative, the figure itself is so awful to consider that the reality must be much worse.

**2. That punishment is eternal.** Mark 9:43-48 speaks of the fire that is not quenched and the worm that does not die—a reference to the continuing existence of human personality in hell.

**3. The body is raised at the Great White Throne judgment.** Revelation 20:11-15 describes the awesome scene as the unsaved dead are raised to stand before God and receive their final sentence of doom.

**4. The unsaved are then cast into the lake of fire where they will reside forever, eternally separated from the presence of Almighty God.** If this is unbearable to think about, if we shrink from such a thought, then let us by all means do whatever is necessary to make sure that such a fate does not befall on the ones we love the most.

**Remember...The reality of hell is more than just a theoretical doctrine.**

## **For the Saved**

- **When the saved die, they go directly into the presence of the Lord.**
  - ✓ **Remember the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).** At the moment of death the believer passes immediately into the personal presence of Jesus Christ. This is our hope and comfort as we stand at the graveside of a loved one.
  - ✓ **Paul said he had a desire “to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philippians 1:23).** He also said, “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body (that is,

separated from the body by death) and at home with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8). These are the words of a man who believed that heaven would begin at the moment of his death.

- ✓ **The soul goes to be with the Lord in heaven, and the body is buried until the day of resurrection when Jesus returns to the earth.** *1 Thessalonians 4:14* says, "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." Here you have both sides of the truth. Christians who die are said to be "with Jesus" (that's the soul in the conscious presence of the Lord) and "have fallen asleep in him" (that's the body which "sleeps" in the grave). Listen to Paul's description of that great reunion of body and soul: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (*1 Thessalonians 4:16*, emphasis added). Here is a clear promise of future bodily resurrection for the believer.
- ✓ **1 Corinthians 15:51-55 adds the crucial fact that our bodies will be "raised imperishable"—that is, with a body that is perfect in every way, free from the vestiges of death and decay. In this life our bodies wear out, like a clock continually running down, but when we are raised, it will be with bodies that can never decay, never wear out, never suffer injury, never grow old, never get sick, and thank God, never die.**

***If you know Jesus, you are going from the land of dying to the land of the living. Here are some of the images the Bible uses for the death of a Christian: going to sleep and waking up in heaven . . . moving from a tent to a mansion . . . walking from the darkness into a well-lit room . . . coming home to see your family and friends . . . being set free from prison . . . taking a long journey to a new land . . . riding a chariot to the New Jerusalem . . . moving into a brand-new home . . . opening a gate to a brand-new world.***

***Remember...If God created man from dirt...He can create our new bodies from dirt...or anything else that our "earthsuit" might be entombed in!***

Christians have always faced death with confidence. As he lay dying, D. L. Moody proclaimed, "Earth recedes, heaven opens before me."  
Catherine Booth, wife of the founder of the Salvation Army, cried out, "The waters are rising, but I am not sinking."

**When Benjamin Franklin was twenty-three years old, he wrote the following epitaph. His words catch the essence of the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection:**

*The body of Benjamin Franklin...Like the cover of an old book,  
Its contents torn out, And stripped of its lettering and gilding,  
Lies here, food for worms.  
But the work shall not be wholly lost: For it will, as he believed, appear  
once more,  
In a new and more elegant edition, Revised and corrected By the Author.*

**What is ahead for us when we die?**

- **Our soul goes into the conscious presence of the Lord.**
- **Our body is buried until the day of resurrection.**
- **When Christ returns, we will be raised bodily from the grave.**
- **Body and soul reunited, we will be with the Lord forever.**

***As Tony Evans says, “Have a good time at my funeral, because I’m not going to be there.”***

**A Truth to Remember:**

***What happens when you die depends on what happens before you die!***



**Bibliography: Much of this text is from Ray Pritchard’s website: Keeping Believing Ministries**