

WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS #42

“What Happens When You Die?”

I. Introduction:

1. We’ve learned this year what a worldview is: a comprehensive belief system that answers the great questions of life. And one of the greatest questions of life is “What happens when you die?”

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THIS LIFE?

2. Mankind has struggled with this question through 6000 years of human history.

3. As we live our lives we cannot avoid thinking about death, because it’s the one appointment none of us can avoid.

“In this world, nothing is certain but death and taxes.”

Ben Franklin

4. I’ve always found it interesting how human beings often treat the subject of death with humor. Groucho Marx, the most famous member of the Marx brothers said...

“I intend to live forever, or die trying.”

Groucho Marx

5. A few years ago, I did some research on epitaphs; some of the humorous things people put on their tombstones.

B. Famous Epitaphs

1. Actual inscriptions on gravesites:

Here are 2 from the cemetery famously known as “Boot Hill”, preserved as a historic site in Tombstone, AZ

“Here lies Lester Moore. 4 slugs from a .44. No less, no more.”

Here lies George Johnson, hanged by mistake in 1882.
‘He was right, we was wrong,
but we strung him up, and now he’s gone.’

W.C. Fields, famous film comedian from the 1930’s and 40’s
“I’d rather be in Philadelphia.”

2 Clever Men Named John

Sir John Strange: Here lies an honest Lawyer. That is Strange.
“Here lies Johnny Yeast. Pardon me for not rising.”

Merv Griffin/Rodney Dangerfield

Merv Griffin, one of the most famous TV emcees of all time: “I will not
be right back after this message.”
Rodney Dangerfield, famous for his self-putdowns of “I get no respect”:
his tombstone says, “There goes the neighborhood.”

Gravestone in Thurmont, MD

“Here lies an atheist. All dressed up and no place to go.”
And from a man with a sense of humor...
George W. Harris who died in 1927: “I knew this would happen.”

A man named Mitchell

“Well this sucks”

Mel Blanc/Voice of the Cartoons

Mel Blanc was known as the “man of a 1000 voices”; before his death in 1989, in 1000’s of cartoons, he was the voice of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Sylvester the cat, Elmer Fudd, and Tweety Bird.

His tombstone says, “That’s all folks!”

And perhaps my favorite of all time, the one on the tombstone of English comedian Spike Milligan and voted Britain’s favorite epitaph...

“I told you I was sick.”

2. It can be fun to take a lighthearted look at a serious subject; but death is nothing to be laughed at! The Bible says...

Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...
Hebrews 9:27 NIV

3. In the biblical worldview, death is not the end; but there are other worldviews.

II. The 3 Worldviews on Death

(Annihilation, Reincarnation, Resurrection)

A. Annihilation

1. Annihilation-From the Latin “nihilum” which means “nothing”

a. In this view, death is the end; you cease to exist

2. 300 years before the birth of Christ, the Greek philosopher Epicurus said...

“Death does not concern us, because as long as we are alive death is not here. And when it comes, we no longer exist.”
Epicurus

a. The Epicurean worldview is still with us today; “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” Those with this worldview believe that the only proper goal in life is to be happy NOW because “when it’s over it’s over.”

“Here’s what happens when you die. You lie in a box and get eaten by worms. I guarantee that when you die, nothing cool happens.”
Howard Stern

b. Most people do not believe in annihilation; the biblical worldview explains why...

God has set eternity in our hearts.
Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has planted eternity in the human heart...

NLT

c. Those who believe that we cease to exist in any way when we die are the smallest group because all men, even the worst of sinners, have some deep seated sense that there is *something* beyond this earthly life.

- John Calvin called it the “sensus divinitatus”, Latin for the “sense of the Divine”.

“This explains humanity’s fascination with the afterlife and how we speak of the departed.”

Dr. Bruce Baugus, Tabletalk magazine

- British Methodist theologian Adam Clarke said...

“God has deeply rooted the idea of eternity in every human heart; and every considerate man sees, that all the operations of God refer to that endless duration.”

Adam Clarke

B. The 2nd Worldview on Death: Reincarnation

1. The 2nd worldview on the subject of death is held by those who believe in “reincarnation”.

2. **Reincarnation**-From the Latin “carne” which means “flesh” + re + en; which means the belief that after death, the soul finds expression in another body.

a. Hollywood film star Shirley MacLaine is a spokeswoman for reincarnation. In her biography, “Out on a Limb”, she said...

“The soul is everlasting, and its learning experience is lifetime after lifetime.”

Shirley MacLaine

(With all due respect, if that’s true, you should be smarter by now)

3. Reincarnation is at the center of Buddhism and Hinduism, 2 of the world's great religions.

a. **Buddhism** is named for its teacher Siddhartha, the "Buddha".

**"Through many a birth wandered I, seeking the builder of this house.
Sorrowful indeed is birth again and again."
Siddhartha Buddha**

There are 500 million Buddhists, 10% of world population.

b. There are also over 1 billion **Hindus** in the world today, 15% of the world population.

- **Hindus believe that every living thing has a soul and when it dies the soul is reincarnated into the body of another living thing (even into an animal.)**
- Most of the world's Hindus live in India, where the cow is considered sacred because they may be reincarnations of a departed ancestor.

"Holy Cow?"

4. Hindus and Buddhists combine to compose 1/4th of the world's population in the belief in reincarnation.

5. But that belief is also found in the Christian cult known as Christian Science, who believe that death takes us on to a "higher plane of existence"; and on and on until we fully realize that is not real at all. As stated by its Founder, Mary Baker Eddy...

**"Life is real and death is the illusion."
Mary Baker Eddy**

a. In Christian Science, you are not sick, you just *think* you're sick. So we suppose one day, you'll just think you are *dead*?

6. But let's move on to the biblical worldview of Death.

Review

The 3 Worldviews of Death

#1 Annihilation

#2 Reincarnation

And finally, we come to the Biblical worldview of death...

#3 Resurrection

III. The Biblical Worldview of Death

A. Resurrection

1. The biblical worldview of what happens when we die is not annihilation or reincarnation; it is “resurrection”.

a. The word is a compound of 2 Latin words; re=again + surrectum=to rise.

“Resurrection”

The rising again to life of all the human dead before the final judgment

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

2. The ultimate end of all time will be Judgment Day, when all the souls of all the dead will be reunited with their bodies and enter eternity into one of 2 destinations: Heaven or Hell. (See far right of diagram below)



Where we end up on the right depends on what we believed on the left!
And what we believe on the left determines what happens when we die.

- At death, the Saved pass through a “narrow gate” into a place of peace and comfort that Jesus called “Abraham’s bosom”; at the Resurrection they receive their rewards and Heaven
- At death, the Lost pass through a “wide gate” into a place of immediate torment Jesus described as in Luke 16; at the Resurrection they will receive their condemnation and eternal separation from God, which is Hell
- **In the story of Lazarus and the right man in Luke 16,** Jesus teaches that between physical death and Final Judgment, the souls of the saved and lost are conscious of their condition; the lost are aware they are separated from God; but the saved are in the presence of the Lord.

3. This is one of the most comforting promises in the Bible; that those who believe in Jesus Christ who die, and absent the body, are *immediately* in the presence of the Lord, awaiting the sure resurrection of their bodies!

a. We see this in also in the account of the thief on the cross who believed in Jesus just before death.

**Jesus said to him, ‘truly I say to you, Today you will be with me in Paradise.
Luke 23:43**

b. And in his 2nd letter to the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul writes of his confidence in the faith of his own death:

**We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body,
and to be present with the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5:8**

4. But saved or lost, there will be a resurrection of all the dead at the final judgment.

5. And the final judgment will be pronounced us in resurrected bodies!

IV. Conclusion: Scripture Readings on Resurrection

Revelation 20:11-12

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God,* and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Revelation 20:13-15

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.* 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS WILL BE
PRONOUNCED UPON RESURRECTED PERSONS!

Notice: This is the “second death”.

“If you are born once, you will die twice. If you are born twice, you will only die once.”

Steven J. Lawson

A. Our Great Comfort in Death

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:24-26

1. Belief in the resurrection is a comfort to the Christian; as noted by the Apostle Paul:

We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you.

2 Corinthians 4:14

a. Then he continues in Chapter 5:

5:1 For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. 2 We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. 3 For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. 4 While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. 5 God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.

And finally...

6 So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. 7 For we live by believing and not by seeing. 8 Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. 10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

The resurrection is motivation for evangelism!

11 Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too.

2 Corinthians 5:11 NLT

Closing Prayer

Title