

After: Eternity is for Real

What Happens One Moment After We Die?
Selected Scriptures (Ps. 90:9-10; Eccl. 11 and Luke 16)

Intro. Today we are starting a three-part series entitled: **After – Eternity is for Real**. We start today by looking at What Happens One Moment After You Die...The next two sermons will focus on What happens after a person dies without Christ (focus on what bible teaches about Hell), and then the third sermon will focus on What happens when a person dies in Christ (focus on what the bible teaches about Heaven). **Today, I want us to consider the question: What Happens One Moment After You Die?** Every person listening today has thought about this question. Books, movies, messages, music and our own curiosity have compelled us to wonder about life after death. Most people who believe in God believe there is life after death. One study reported that 45% of atheists and agnostics believed in some sort of afterlife. Almost all world religions have their own version for what happens when a person dies.

Eccl. 3:11 “he has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man’s heart...”. Built into the DNA of humanity is eternity, and the access to eternity is death. @ John Milton: “Death is the golden key that opens the door to eternity.”

- Many people have a Fascination and Fear when it comes to death.
- **Woody Allen** said, “I’m not afraid of death; I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”
- **“Everyone wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.”**
- While some may fear death and others may try to avoid death, the fact is that death is coming to every person (unless they are in the rapture). @ If you live to be 70 years old, 4.5 billion people will have died in your lifetime.

Summary: Today, we want to look at the reality of death, the Destinations after death, and the hope we have when we face death. We really asking and answering three questions: What is death? Where do we go when we die? And Do I have to be afraid of dying?

I. The Reality of Death – What is death?

@ J.R.R. Tolkien, Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, “End? No, the journey doesn’t end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.”

- A. An appointed reality (Heb. 9:27** “...it is **appointed** for man to die once, and *after that comes the judgment*” (cover the judgment later); **Ps. 90:9-10** “For all our days pass under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil, and we fly away.” **Eccl. 3:1-2** “For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die.” Death is an appointed reality because God is the only one who knows.
- B. An inherited reality - Rom. 5:12** “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...”. Death was passed down...

- C. **A transient reality - Luke 16:22** “The poor man died and...The rich man died and...”. There is no period after death. It’s as one writer described death: a Conjunction!
- *At death, our soul is separated from the body - Gen. 2:7* “then the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and God breathed into him the breathe of life and he became a living creature.” God breathes life into man, giving him a soul, essence of His personhood and the image bearer of God. **James 2:26** says, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”
 - *At death, our soul is destined for a new reality – Luke 16* “Lazarus was carried by the angels and the rich man opened his eyes torment in Hades...”. Both men experienced a new but very different reality at death.

@ Tombstone: “Poor stranger when you pass me by, as you are now, once was I. As I am now so you will be, so prepare for death and follow me.” One guy wrote on the back of the stone: “To follow you, I am not content, until I know which way you went.”

D. A conscious reality - Luke 16:23-24, 27-28; Rev. 6:9-10 Saints under the altar...

@ Georgetown University published a study in their BioEthics News from a professor at Southampton Univ in England stating that new research is showing that people retain consciousness for at least several moments after death. The Bible has already spoken on this point that consciousness goes...

II. The Destinations After Death – What happens when we die?

A. There is the intimacy and immediacy of Heaven

1. *Heaven is about the intimacy and rest we have through Jesus Christ – “carried to Abraham’s side” (bosom) – closeness*
2. *Heaven is the immediate presence with Jesus Christ – some teach a Pergatory...others teach Soul sleep until the second coming but here are two definitive passages to help us ----*

2 Cor. 5:6-9 “So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

and **Phil 1:21-24** “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.”

B. There is the permanence and place of Hell

1. *Hell is eternal – Jesus speaks of the everlasting nature of Hell throughout the Gospels.*
2. *Hell is the torment of remembrance, isolation and continual frustration – the rich remembers his family and does not want them to come there, but he cannot, and in truth, does not want to change his situation. More on that next week.*
3. *Hell is the utter separation from the merciful presence of God – the gulf fixed.*

We will look at Hell in detail next week, but let me leave you with this thought before we move to the last point: **Outside of the cross, hell helps to explain the existence of God & the enormity of His love for us!** I will explain that next week if you care to come back.

III. The Hope We Have to Face Death – Do I have to be afraid of death?

@ **Helen Keller**: “Death is no more than passing from one room into another. But there’s a difference for me, you know. Because in that other room I shall be able to see.”

A. Death is but a shadow for those who trust in Christ - Ps. 23:4 “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...”.

B. Death has no sting - 1 Cor. 15:55-56 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”

C. Death, for those in Christ, is never experienced again - Rev. 21:4 “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” – How can God say this?

Conclusion: Ed McClowney, Pastor, used to tell a story about a group of Germans right after WW2, when the Germans were beginning to understand what had happened during the Holocaust, there was a playwright, Gunton Rudenborg, who wrote a play produced in Germany entitled: *The Sign of Jonah*. In the play people were talking about the travesty of the Holocaust and they were gathering together asking, “Did you do it? Did you know? Why did you do it?” People would say, “It wasn’t me. I was just following orders. It was the person above me.” Over and over again this happened, until it dawned on people that the blame went all the way to the top. This was God’s fault. The evil and injustice of the world was God’s fault.

At the end of the play there is a trial, they put God on trial and find Him guilty. Here is what they say, “They sentence God to become a human being, a wanderer on the earth, deprived of His rights, homeless, hungry and thirsty. He, himself shall die and lose his son and suffer the agonies of fatherhood and when at last he dies, he shall be disgraced and ridiculed.” – McClowney says, “Wait a minute! Wait a minute! That is the story of God! He is the One who took upon Himself the death we should have died, so that when we die we can live the life He created us to live!

Michael Green writes: “The God of the Gospel is the only God who doesn’t write us a book on pain and sends it down and says, “Here’s what that means.” The God of the Gospel is only God who actually comes down and shares in the forsakenness we feel in a universe gone wrong. We feel abandoned. We feel forsaken. But He comes down and experiences it Himself!”

He is our HOPE!