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THE GOOD NEWS FOR A  
MODERN WORLD

WHAT  
HOPE IS  
THERE FOR  
THE DEAD?

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## WHAT HOPE IS THERE FOR THE DEAD?

The answer to this question is important because it gives the greatest glory to the Father's purpose for man. When we harmonize this chapter with the previous chapters, the Father's love becomes crystal clear, unambiguous and undisputed, and man's greatest fear - the fear of personality extinction – dissipates into the wind.

### Good News About the Dead

Before Jesus arrived, many Jews believed in a literal resurrection, or bringing one back from death to life again on earth at a future time that they called "the last day." We know, based on the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel According to John, that Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, believed in such a resurrection.

When Lazarus became ill and near death, Mary and Martha sent word to their friend Jesus. Jesus was out of town when he received news of Lazarus' illness, and by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had died:

**"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."— *John 11:21-24***

Unlike Martha, there were some Jews who did not believe in a resurrection. The Sadducees, a prominent religious sect associated with the Jewish priesthood, were among those. To them, the resurrection was ludicrous. On a prior occasion, they attempted to ridicule Jesus by presenting a convoluted story in order to demonstrate the unreasonableness of the resurrection. (*Mark 12:15-23*) In reply, Jesus said to them:

**"At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; **they will be like the angels in heaven.**" – *Mark 12:23-25***

Jesus was educating them as to the resurrection, namely that it was not a bringing back to life of a human body, but a bringing back to life of the personality of the deceased person in a new body, a body like that of the angels. Jesus further emphasized the certainty of the resurrection:

**"At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, '**I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**'? **He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.** You are badly mistaken."**

– *Mark 12:23-27*

Jesus explained that though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had died, God viewed them as alive because their resurrection was assured; it was guaranteed. If there was to be no resurrection of the dead, then God would not view them as living. Their lives would have been over, finished, with no hope.

It is true that when Jesus resurrected Lazarus, he brought him back to life in his previous human body. But the resurrection of Lazarus was not the type of resurrection Jesus promised his followers. The resurrection of Lazarus had a particular purpose.

“So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.” When he heard this, Jesus said, “**This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.**” – *John 11:4*

Yes, Lazarus’ resurrection was to demonstrate the **power** of God, to show that the Son of God had the authority even to bring life back into a body. We also know Lazarus’ death was not the type of resurrection Jesus promised because Lazarus eventually died again, likely of the same illness that took his life the first time.

As to the resurrection Jesus promised, speaking again to Martha, Jesus said:

“Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”  
– *John 11:24-27*

Those who die as followers of Christ are assured a resurrection, just as sure as the resurrections of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And at a particular time in the future, Jesus said that those who exercise faith in him who are alive would not die at all. This was a promise of everlasting life, unlike Lazarus’ resurrection, though we have every reason to believe that when Lazarus is resurrected in the future, he will attain the true resurrection.

Jesus openly and repeatedly taught that those who exercised faith in him, while they were still alive, were given everlasting life – a resurrection guarantee:

“Very truly I tell you, the one who believes **has eternal life.**”  
– *John 6:47*

“Now **this is eternal life:** that **they know you,** the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” – *John 17:3*

“Very truly I tell you, whoever **hears** my word and **believes** him who sent me **has eternal life** and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” – *John 5:24*

“And this is the testimony: God has **given us** eternal life, and **this life is in his Son.** Whoever **has** the Son has life; whoever

does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that **you have eternal life.**” *1 John 5:11-13*

All those who die in union with Jesus Christ, the Father views as living. Though they will sleep in death for a time, they have a guarantee that they will live again, but not in a strife-torn world, nor in a corruptible body. They will get a hold on the real life – life in the heavenly kingdom!

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so **that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.**” – *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

This is the good news about the dead. For those who exercise faith, death is temporary and unfolds into the glorious eternal heavenly career.

### **The Condition of the Dead**

In order to understand the condition of the dead, we should first consider the condition of the living. The human being is a composite of various component parts: a body, a mind, a personality, and the indwelling divine spirit of the Father.

The **body** was formed from the elements of the earth and is actuated by the breath of life, just as are the animals. We learn in Genesis:

“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” – *Genesis 2:7*

Our brain is a part of our body. It itself does not think; it is simply an organ – like our liver, heart, and lungs are organs. The function of the brain is to collect, sort and store data. It is different from the mind.

The **mind** remains an unexplained phenomena that reacts to the external and internal stimuli received and processed by the brain. It is the thinking part of man that experiences consciousness – the ability to know and be known. The mind accesses the data stored in the brain and has the ability to reason, learn and profit from experiences; thus, the mind has creative potential.

Animals have limited mind function; they cannot experience the higher aspects of mind, such as the capacity for spirit receptivity, and the ability to worship.

“Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct— **as irrational animals do**—will destroy them.” – *Jude 1:10*

The **personality** is a unique gift from the Father. No two personalities are exactly alike. In the resurrection, when we are raised in a new body, it is our personality that survives and that identifies us. Whereas mind can recognize another person, personality determines how to relate to and communicate with that person. Personality is endowed with morality and is the part of man that makes the decisions as to how to respond to moral opportunities and dilemmas:

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For **we know that our old self was crucified with him** so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” – *Romans 6:5-6*

A good example of the difference between mind and personality is when two people observe the same event, but come away with two different interpretations of what happened. Both minds see the event and process the data surrounding the event. But the divergent personalities characterize and color the meaning of the event and determine how to relate to it.

Personality is the part of us with the ability to choose to do or not do the divine will.

“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is **being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.**”  
– *Colossians 3:9-10*

”That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, **to put off your old self**, which is being **corrupted by its deceitful desires**; to be made new **in the attitude of your minds**; and to put on the new self, **created to be like God** in true righteousness and holiness.” – *Ephesians 4:20-24*

Accordingly, our personality is our authentic self. The part of us we are referring to when we say “I” or “me.” It is the part of us that wants to live on forever; the part that we so desperately seek to preserve alive. Personality survival is the impetus for memorial services, monuments, memorial tombs, and the like. It is the part that we, unknowingly, plead for God to hold on to, as did certain Bible writers:

“**Remember me** for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.”  
– *Nehemiah 13:14*

“Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. **A scroll of remembrance was written** in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.” – *Malachi 3:16*

“Then he said, “Jesus, **remember me** when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” – *Luke 23:42-43*

And finally, the human is endowed with the **indwelling spirit fragment of the Father.**

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?” – *1 Corinthians 3:16*

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.” – *1 Corinthians 6:19*

This is the actual presence of the Father that indwells our minds. It is the “force actuating our minds.” Our personality is developed through the united function of the mind and this indwelling spirit of the Father.

Having identified the parts that make up the living human being, we can determine the condition of the human being when he dies.

The body is part of the earth, so at death it returns to the earth; it does not go to heaven:

“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; **for dust you are and to dust you will return.**” – *Genesis 3:19*

The mind, the seat of consciousness, ceases to function at death:

“For the living know that they will die, **but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward**, and even their name is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.” – *Ecclesiastes 9:5-6*

The indwelling spirit leaves the dead body and returns to the Father:

“When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.” – *Psalms 146:4*

“And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and **the spirit returns to God who gave it.**” – *Ecclesiastes 12:7*

That leaves only the personality, the identity of the person. We learn that the personality is recorded in God’s Scroll of Remembrance, the Book of Life. (*Malachi 3:16; Revelation 20:15*)

These facts conclusively show that at death there is no tormenting nor any hellfire for those who are disapproved. Tormenting requires a body to sense pain, a consciousness to be aware of the punishment, an a personality that can understand why it is being tortured. Further, eternal torment requires the person be gifted with everlasting life. But we know that everlasting life is a gift from God to those exercising faith in Jesus Christ. No, the penalty for failure to exercise faith and choosing to do the Father’s will is personality extinction, non-existence, nothing more:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – *Romans 6:23*

And from the information in Chapter 2, we know that God is loving, even the personification of love and therefore could have no part in tormenting his children. If we read scriptures that seem to indicate that the Father would engage in such unimaginable conduct, the reader must consider the context. Is it an illustration, a parable? Is it a tool used to explain matters to the Jewish mind? Or could it result from a failure to properly understand the words in the scripture? This type of examination will clear up the matter and uphold the Father's love and mercy.

### The Gift of Life

The Father's provision for life is generous. We read:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him** shall not perish but have eternal life.” – *John 3:16*

“For my Father's will is that everyone **who looks to the Son and believes in him** shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.” – *John 6:40*

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, **but everyone to come to repentance.**”  
– *2 Peter 3:9*

Even those who have doctrinal errors, but have faith in God and in Christ can be saved:

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. **If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved**—even though only as one escaping through the flames.” – *1 Corinthians 3:11-15*

And though we are told that the road leading to life is narrow (*Matthew 7:13-14*), based on the above scriptures, we know it is certainly wide enough for all those who desire life.

Finally, Jesus said:

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when **all who are in their graves** will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.” – *John 5:28-29*

And the Apostle Paul stated:

“I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of **both the righteous and the wicked.**” – *Acts 24:15*

Clearly, there may be many more people resurrected than we would think. So it is unwise to make a definitive statement as to who will **not** be resurrected. But we can say that those who exercise faith in Christ are assured a resurrection. We can take it for granted (yes, we said take it for granted) that all sons of the Kingdom will be resurrected. As sons, we can then focus on our service to mankind, the ministry of reconciliation (*1 Corinthians 5:18-20*), and help others gain their own survival guarantee.

### **What the Resurrection Tells Us About God**

The resurrection tells us that our continued existence is important to the Father. It tells us that the Father has more in store for us than living a normal human life on earth – marrying, having children, getting a job, and amusing ourselves with various forms of entertainment.

“However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love him.” – *1 Corinthians 2:9*

When we think of what must be involved in bringing back to life the personalities of millions, maybe billions, of people and creating new incorruptible bodies for them, and the number of angelic and spirit personalities that must be involved in such an undertaking, we are humbled at the realization that we are such a major and central part of the Father’s universal purpose.

Overall, the resurrection assures us of the Father’s endless love, His divine mercy, His infinite wisdom, His unequalled generosity, His enduring patience, His inherent righteousness, His eternal foresight, His absolute power, His ultimate supremacy, His everlasting goodness, and His undisputed justice. Amen.

*“Elaia Luchnia”*