

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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From Time To Eternity

We are living in an age of time. While time exists two things are certain: people will be born and people will die. This is a constant and endless cycle. Thousands of people are born every year and every year thousands of people die. Between life and death there are certain commonalities among all people, There are conditions we all share alike, and choices or decisions we all must make. Our decisions determine where we go from this place called earth, and where we shall spend eternity. In this article I want to discuss some things that happen between birth and death, things that happen after death, and things that shall happen at the end of time as we now know it.

The beginning of existence, in regard to each one of us individually, takes place when we are conceived in our mother's womb and eventually are born into this world. We are all born into a common condition, free from the sins of this world. We have not, in spite of what many so-called theologians teach, inherited Adam's sin. The only thing that we have in common with Adam is a fleshly nature. Adam was created without sin, for Genesis 1:31 declares, "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good..." Yet Adam did sin. The fact that Adam sinned does not indicate that he was created totally depraved, it just shows that he could and did make the wrong choice. Now like Adam, we are innocent in the beginning of our existence. The fact that we sin does not suggest that we are born sinners any more than Adam's sin suggest that he was created a sinner. Nor does it indicate that we have inherited sin. For God to declare all guilty based upon Adam's sin would be unjust. We simply do not serve such a God (Ezekiel 18:4, 19-20).

Another mutual experience all share is growth. All babies, provided no tragedy occurs, experience growth. They grow, not only physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. And, of course, a part of the growing process is growing older day by day. Eventually those who are born into this world reach an age of accountability. At that stage all are confronted with the decision to sin or to refrain from sin. So far no one, except our Savior Jesus Christ, has always made the right decision. The Bible says that we have all sinned; thus, all have at some point fallen into the realm of spiritual darkness (Romans 3:23). The question is what are we to do about our sins? Basically there are two choices. Either we can ignore our sins and remain in the realm of darkness, or we can allow God to cover them by following His redemptive plan of salvation. Here is where the thread of commonality stops among mankind. We do not all make the same

decision in regard to our sins. Those who refuse God's will share a common fate—spiritual separation from God now and eternal damnation when time ends. Those who obey the gospel, which is God's plan of salvation, are translated out of darkness and into God's kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Obeying the gospel consists of hearing the gospel and believing it (John 6:44-45; Mark 16:16), repenting of sins (Acts 2:38), confessing Christ as God's Son (Romans 10:9-10), and being baptized (1 Peter 3:21). Like those who reject Jesus, all who obey the gospel share a common experience—their sins are forgiven, and they enter a state of spiritual light in which they are free from condemnation (Romans 8:1). These are the choices all have, and the decisions all make between the time they come into existence and finally die.

Now, what about death? Death is another one of those things that is common to all who live. We must all die (Hebrews 9:27). It is important to know, though, that death is not a ceasing to exist. When one dies, the body is buried, but the spirit continues to live. In Ecclesiastes 12:7 the wise man said, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Since death is not the end of us, what happens on the other side of death? Where do we go from death? The Bible has the answer. It says that we go to the Hadean realm. Hades is the realm of the unseen. It is divided into two sections. One is called *paradise* or *Abraham's bosom*, the other *tartarus*. As one lives on earth on this side of time, he determines where he will go to await the resurrection and judgment. Paradise is a place of comfort for the faithful (Luke 16:22, 23). It is the place where Jesus went for three days after He was crucified (John 2:19; Acts 2:27, 31). His body remained in the tomb, but His spirit went to Hades. Paradise is also the place where Jesus promised to meet the penitent thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43). Tartarus, on the other hand, is a place of torment where the unjust are reserved until judgment (Luke 16:23, 28; 2 Peter 2:4, 9; Jude 6). Moreover, we are taught in Luke 16:26 that one cannot cross from one section of Hades to the other. After death your abode is fixed until judgment. There is no second chance!

The next thing that the Bible talks about is the end of time. When Jesus returns, all the dead will be raised and those who are alive will be changed (John 5:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). At that time this world as we know it will end (2 Peter 3:10-12). Next will come the judgment in which a formal pronouncement of where every soul shall spend eternity will be made (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12). Finally, the faithful will go to their eternal home in heaven (1 Peter 1:3, 4; 2 Timothy 4:6-8), and the unfaithful will go to their final destination—hell (Revelation 20:10-15), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30).

So, there is a biblical look at the different conditions that exist from time to eternity. We obviously can do nothing before time. It is also clear that we can do nothing, as far as preparing our eternal resting place is concerned, after we die physically. Therefore, we must be concerned with what we can do now while we still have time (John 9:4; 2 Corinthians 6:2). Where will you spend eternity? You know your options. Now it depends on the decisions you make.

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