

What will happen to you when you die?  
Easter98  
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Two boys, eleven and thirteen years old, took their grandfather's hunting rifles and waited outside their school while one of them pulled the fire alarm forcing all the students outside. Then with practiced aim they proceeded to kill four of their fellow students and a teacher.

The second longest tornado in history ripped through Alabama and 42 were killed as homes were disintegrated.

Two sophomore boys from one of our own high schools hung themselves.

A fourteen year old girl left her new born baby to die in a dumpster.

A father returned home after work this past week, right here in the Friendly Hills sub-division of our city, only to find his 3 month old and three year old children dead.

The news of death comes at us with such frequency and with such ugliness that I find myself becoming somewhat immune to it.

Most of us don't have the emotional capacity to handle all that grief, so we have learned to shut it out.

But when death comes close to home we can't shut it out.

There are a lot of Bear Creek High School students for whom death is a very present reality.

There are many homes in Denver today where death cannot be ignored or thought of lightly.

And death will touch every one of us.

You say, "What a morbid way to begin an Easter morning message!"

I simply want to remind you of a fundamental fact:  
Without death there is no resurrection!

Resurrection only has significance where there is death.

Easter is not about spring, budding plants, and freshly born chickens and rabbits.

Easter is about resurrection - the dead coming to life.

Resurrection will only have importance to you if you have come to grips with the reality of death - your death and the death of those important to you.

I want you to walk away today with one question and hopefully one answer to that question.

Here's the question:

What will happen to YOU when you die?

Some people try to convince themselves they aren't concerned about that question, they are concerned only about life - and living life well.

They pride themselves in thinking they don't deal with "what ifs".

But this is not a "what if" question, this is a "what then" question.

It is not "if" you will die" it is only "when".

And when you die, what will happen to you?

Some people try to convince themselves there isn't enough information about what happens after death - therefore there is no point in concerning oneself with it - it's all hypothetical.

They pride themselves in living in the "real" world, not the fairy tale world of make believe.

But what is amazing to me is that many of those same people say they believe in God.

But how do we know anything about God?

Three sources:

What we see around us - nature.

What we feel within - conscience.

What we hear from someone else.

The first of those sources - nature - tells us this:

There is a powerful and awesome intelligence behind what has been made. Most in the world refer to that intelligence as God.

But notice what it doesn't tell us.

It doesn't tell us anything about our future - except, by observation, that we all die.

The second of those sources - conscience - tells us that we regularly blow it morally.

We feel a sense of guilt for some of the things we have done or even are doing - we feel we have violated some universal standard.

But notice what it doesn't tell us.

It doesn't tell us anything about how to deal with our sense of guilt.

It only tells us we have failed - we have failed God.

The third of those sources - **“What we hear from someone else”** is only as reliable as the one who tells us.

The truth of the matter is that almost **everything you believe about God** (except his power and your guilt) has come from one source, God's own mouth -

What you know about God, that is accurate, has come to you from God - from what he has told you.

And the source of that information God's own Word, the Bible.

Now at this point someone could say, "Well, how do we know the Bible is true?"

Yes, someone could say that but I don't think it's you.

If you thought the Bible was unreliable it would make no sense that you are even in church today.

The truth is you have no **other** reliable source of information about **the** God you claim to believe in -except the Bible.

So you are stuck with the Bible - either what others **say** the Bible says or what you see for yourself it says.

So what does **God** say, in the Bible, about what happens to you when you die?

## To understand it we must start at an earlier point.

Watch it carefully:

Eph 2:3 "We are by nature children of wrath."

Romans 8:5 "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires"

Romans 5:8 "sin entered the world through one man" Adam and like it or not we are all, "by nature", sinners.

It is our very nature, it is part of the warp and woof of our being to watch out first of all and most of all for "number one".

It is our very nature to seek our own way even when it means disobeying God and hurting others.

Therefore God describes us well in

Romans 3:10 "There is no one righteous, not even one."

Or as he says it in Romans 3:23 "All have sinned..."

For God to point out that we are all sinners seems to be stating the obvious - I've met no one who hasn't freely admitted he or she has violated his own standards and much more the standards of society and of God.

So most of us are ready to say "yes, I believe I am a sinner - but so is everyone else - so I'm in good company or at least I have a lot of company.

The problem many of us have with what God says happens to us when we die is not in admitting that we are sinners **but in agreeing with what God says is the result of that sin.**

I'm convinced that most of the world believes God grades on a curve.

Most of us believe we have sinned but some are so much worse than us that when God decides who goes to heaven or hell - we'll be okay.

Or we believe that God is so loving and merciful that surely he'd never send anyone to hell - except maybe the very worst.

**But those ideas do not come from God.**

Hear what God says:

Ezk 18:4 "The person who sins is the one who will die."

Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death."

2 Thessalonians 1:8,9 "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord..."

Any violation of the holiness, the perfection, the righteousness of God is sin.

We are ready to admit that we are sinners but we find it very hard to admit that the wages, the result of our sin is eternal death.

We want to think that maybe God will give us a lower grade because of our sin, or that maybe he will make us suffer a little, but send us to hell? No, not little of me.

But when we think like that we are thinking our thoughts not God's. God says "The wages of sin is death. - everlasting destruction."

Someone wants to say "that's not fair".

But it is fair when we understand the holiness and justice of God.

Habakkuk 1:13 "(God's) eyes are too pure to look on evil; (He) cannot tolerate wrong."

Jesus said it this way in Matthew 5:48 "You are to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect".

God is not like us in that God is not a mixture of good and bad - He is only good - perfect.

And it would contradict his nature to allow sin in his presence.

But as we have seen, the problem for us is not only that we, sinners, can't come into God's presence because he's holy, but that the JUSTICE of God demands that we, as sinners, be punished.

A perfect, holy God cannot overlook sin.

He can't just pretend it doesn't exist or that you and I didn't do it. Sin must be punished.

Now who are we going to believe?

Are we going to believe what we or others wish was true that somehow God will grade on a curve or just overlook our sin or are we going to believe what God says is true?

Remember our only **reliable** source of information about God and our relationship to him is the Bible.

This puts us in a very difficult position.

It's a very hard choice.

If we **don't** believe God we have virtually nothing to believe with any reliability - we are on our own and life is a gamble and death is a terrifying unknown.

(Don't believe God and take your chances)

But if we believe God we are also in trouble.

Because God says we are sinners deserving eternal destruction.

(Do believe God and know you are going to hell)

I don't want you to choose between those two without knowing the rest of the story.

In churches we talk about the "Gospel".

That word means "good news"

Thus far what you have heard is not good news.

And what you will hear next will only **be** good news to you if you believe what God has already said out your sin and its consequences.

Resurrection **means nothing** where there is no death.

When we come to understand and accept the trouble we are in with God because of our sin, the news we hear next is very good news.

Again, here is the way God says it:

Ephesians 2:1 "As for you, you were dead in your sins."

Spiritually dead - our spirits are dead, separated from God and headed for eternal destruction.

But Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life!" John 10:10

God repeats that fact over and over again:

John 3:17 God sent his son into the world to save the world.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

Romans 5:8 For God demonstrated his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died **for us.**"

The good news is that God the Son, Jesus, died in our place. God said "The wages of sin is death" - Jesus came and took the consequence of our sin on himself - he died our death.

He suffered the wrath of God against our sin so we would not have to.

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous dying for the unrighteous (us), to bring us to God."

**Not only** does Jesus die for our sins - paying the penalty for us **but he also** gives to us his righteousness.

There are two things Jesus does for us:

He **removes the penalty** by dying for us AND

He **gives us his righteousness**, his perfection with which we can now have a relationship with a holy, perfect God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might have the righteousness of God"

And the supreme proof that Jesus' death for us satisfied God's justice against our sin and that he made available Jesus' holiness to be given to us, is that God raised him from the dead.

Here's the way God has Paul say it in 1 Corinthians 15:17 "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

But "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead..."

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the supreme proof that there is life after death - spiritual life after spiritual death and physical life after physical death.

It is no wonder to me that Peter and James and John and the rest of the apostles were fearless in their proclamation of the gospel from that day forward - they had seen Jesus alive after he had been very dead.

The implications of that were staggering.

Jesus said, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."

And standing before those disciples was that risen from the dead - Jesus. And he said, based on his death and resurrection for them and us, if we ask him to forgive us and to resurrect us spiritually - give us his life - and trust him to do so, he will - ask him and believe him and he will.

That's the gospel - Resurrection - resurrection of our spirits now and of our bodies when Jesus comes again.

Jesus called it "new birth" , being "born again".

And Jesus said, in essence, the proof that He can do this for us - this resurrection - is that he who was dead is now alive.

It's no wonder they trusted Him - don't you?

Death is all around us - that is what makes the resurrection so awesome. In Jesus, there is life for our spirits, life that will never die. In Jesus, there is life for our bodies, life after death, bodies that will never again die.

What will happen to YOU when you die?

For many of us in this place, because we have been spiritually resurrected in this life we will be physically resurrected to live with Jesus Christ forever after we die.

Is that your future?

Aunt Martha was the oldest member of the congregation and she was very old.

One day she called Pastor Jim to come and see her that there was something important she had to discuss with him.

When Jim arrived Martha informed him that the doctors had just discovered inoperable tumors and gave her about six months to live.

She assured the Pastor that she was ready to meet Jesus but she did



want to discuss the funeral arrangements.

She told him what she wanted at her funeral and she concluded by saying I want to be buried with my Bible in one hand and a table FORK in the other.

“Why do you want to be buried with a fork?” the pastor asked.

“Well,” said Aunt Martha, “whenever I would attend fancy dinner a server would usually come toward the end of the meal and collect my dirty plates and would whisper “you can keep your fork.”

Do you know what that meant? Dessert was coming.  
And not just any dessert like Jello that I could eat with a spoon.

When they told me I could keep my fork I knew the best was yet to come.  
It meant that it would be a substantial dessert like chocolate cake or cherry pie.

When you hear people ask “Why does she have that fork in her hand?”, you tell them - She kept her fork because she knew the best was yet to come.

What will happen to you when you die?

Will you invite the resurrected Jesus to forgive you for your sins, will you trust him today to give you his righteousness - to resurrect your spirit today?

Will you trust him to resurrect your body when you die?

Here's the way God says it:

John 1:12 “As many as receive Jesus to them God gives the right to be called the children of God”

John 5:24 “He who has the Son (Jesus) has life”.

It is as simple as asking him and trusting him.  
Will you do so today?

He's alive and he offers you life.

Pray

Dave Laube comes next.