

“When the Future Invaded the Present”

April 16, 2006

Dr. Jerry Nelson

www.soundliving.org

There is a difference, sometimes even a conflict, between what we can reason to be true and what we actually experience.

For example the human brain can be dissected and analyzed and proven to be made up only of certain cells pulsing with electrical energy.

But placed in the conscious human being, the brain is much more than what can be analyzed.

There is an awareness and a self-awareness that cannot be explained by merely what is, by the material.

Our experience surpasses what can be naturally explained.

Life is infinitely greater than the mere sum of its parts.

We can describe physical matter, we can track the internal manufacturing and distribution of chemicals surging through the body, we can explain the synapses of the brain **but how do you explain love.**

Within the past week, I was lying on the bed with my young son one night after we had read together.

He was sleepy and he laid his head on my chest and flung his arm over me and then just gently patted me.

What does a father feel in that moment?

Our experience points beyond what we can explain by the material world.

It has happened many times, but I remember one time particularly vividly.

I was on my motorcycle on a summer evening in the San Juan Mountains between Silverton and Durango, Colorado.

The air was that perfect temperature that you just about can't even feel.

The light was soft from the sun sinking slowly in the west.

The trees, the cliffs, the mountain peaks all around, the smooth pavement making for almost silent movement along the road combined to make one of those perfect times.

I was suddenly aware of it all, and I drove for miles just weeping. I was filled with joy, with wonderment, with peace and yet at the same time a yearning for more.

I was tempted to say, “it doesn’t get any better than this” but I knew intuitively that this was only part of something much deeper and bigger – something I couldn’t begin to get my mind around.

Life is infinitely greater than the sum of its parts –

Life, as we experience it with its beauty and pleasure, **points beyond life.**

I’ve stood alone on the Oregon coast under an overcast sky with the waves of the ocean pounding against the rocks.

I’ve looked out into that vastness and found it haunting.

I felt swallowed up in its largeness, and there was a disturbing unsettled sense that there is so much more.

You can’t begin to explain those emotions physiologically.

You can’t even explain them psychologically.

They point to something outside of us, outside of our world.

There is a difference, sometimes even a conflict, between our five senses and our sixth sense, our intuition.

An important example of that is physical death.

Our five senses tell us death is the end.

If you have seen a dead body, particularly a dead human body, and especially if you have watched a body die, your five senses tell you it is over.

There is no evidence for anything beyond.

The humanist manifesto declares: “As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context. There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body.”

Bertrand Russell opined, “No intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave.”

But our “sixth sense,” our intuition, says they are wrong!
Everything within us demands that life is more.

Yes, there have probably always been atheists, but not many.
Every culture ever known has believed in life beyond this life.
We have intuitively known that the passions we feel, the beauty we behold, all that we experience of life, point to something outside of ourselves.

Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, then Vice President George H.W. Bush attended the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Breshnev.

The Soviets had made a religion out of denying the existence of God.

But there, in the very citadel of that godless regime, amidst the most powerful of its leaders, Mrs. Breshnev, dared to defy the hopelessness of their beliefs.

Just before the casket was closed, she reached down into it and made the sign of the cross on her husband’s chest.

Though schooled in atheism, she hoped they had all been wrong and that the love she had experienced would not end at the grave

She hoped there was yet another life.

Love, beauty, and hope all point beyond.

Our experience cries for it but **unaided** reason denies it.

What can we know, what can we trust?

I've spoken already this morning of the difference and conflict that often exists between our intuition and experience of life on the one hand and our five senses and unaided reason on the other.

But there is a third source of truth – It is called “revelation” – truth that is revealed to us.

Someone from that other reality, from that reality that we intuitively know must be there, reveals truth to us.

Oh, we have evidence of that other reality – the reality of God.

The beauty of this universe shouts the existence of God.

Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Or as the Apostle Paul wrote of it in Romans 1:20 “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.”

The passions and hopes of mankind demand a reality beyond what we can see and God gives us evidence of that reality.

But while the existence of another world, of God, was universally known, the question of the immortality of us humans was still unresolved.

While God remains eternal, while the world goes on, does death mean the end for the individual?

Mankind had always hoped otherwise, God had promised otherwise, but no one had seen evidence of it.

Death seems so final.

But then something happened that changed everything.

Mark 16: 1-7

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after

sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "

Do you realize what this means?

For all of human history, up to **that** time, death appeared to be the end.

But in the resurrection of Jesus everything becomes possible.

God opened a window allowing us a glimpse into the future.

From another reality, a reality beyond our own, an existence outside our created universe, God reached into ours.

He began it with the incarnation – God the Son coming to earth!

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word (God the Son) and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Hebrews 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

He entered our world and became one of us.

But he not only entered our world, **he allowed us to see into the world to come**, into that reality beyond our time and space.

For he not only lived among us and died for us, he rose from the dead.

Over 500 witnesses saw him; saw his resurrected body, a body no longer limited by the frailty of our fallen humanness, a body no longer subject to death.

In him we see past the grave and we see our future if we are trusting in him.

Here's the way the Bible says it, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24 "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (died). For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

The Bible declares what we **suspect intuitively** but can only **know by revelation** – there is life beyond this life.

And it is that life which gives this life meaning.

In God the Son, God reached from the future, from the age to come, back into this present age.

1 John 5:11-12 "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

There **is** more than meets the eye.

The longings of our hearts are not mere illusions.

We do not have to reconcile ourselves to a random world without meaning. (Cf. Chapter 23 *The Good Life* by Colson and Fickett)

Because he lives, we too shall live, and do live.

It is that future existence, that future experience that makes sense of the passions and beauty, the human experience here and now.

Jesus said he came that we might have life, and have it abundantly.

That requires a perspective beyond the grave.

What you can see depends on your vantage point; because of Jesus, I will view life from the entrance of the empty tomb. (Paraphrase of W. Paul Jones)

Are you trusting in the risen Savior? Will you?