

GOD'S UNCHANGING PURPOSE

By

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Nothing in the world can stop it. War, famine, sickness, disease, financial disaster, death — none of these can keep God from fulfilling His purpose. Paul calls it His “eternal purpose,” life and immortality brought to light by the gospel.

Life after death? It depends. The promise is only to those who want the kind of life God offers; Life in His image. For all the rest it will be: Death after Death!

From Adam on, the warning is loud and clear that the destiny of all who reject God's purpose is death — to perish, be destroyed, consumed, burned up! Line upon line, scripture repeats it and illustrates it. See John 3:16, Acts 3:23, Psa. 37:20 and II Peter 3:7. This is for the majority who travel the “broad way that leads to destruction” (Matt. 7:13).

What of the remnant, that minority of history who reject the world in order to be pleasing to God? To them is the promise of Life! Not life AT death, but life AFTER death, at the coming of Christ. (Although the passing of time may be nothing to those who have passed out of time.)

Take the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Read them through and write down everything you find that speaks of a life after death. Then go to Acts and do the same thing. Turn to Romans, Corinthians and all the letters of the New Testament, writing down the clear references to life after death. Here is what you will have: RESURRECTION.

That's why Paul defined the gospel (good news) as the fact that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he has been raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (I Cor. 15:1–4).

The Good News requires resurrection from the grave. There is no life in the grave. That idea, that at death you become more alive than ever (!), came not from Scripture but from Greek philosophy. It was preached by Plato, not by Paul.

Paul is a resurrection man, from start to finish. If no resurrection, he says, then “they also that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (I Cor. 15:18).

What? You mean they are not flitting around in the bliss of heaven? Right. They have to be resurrected. This, Paul says, is the reason we do not sorrow at death. Christ will come from heaven and call forth the dead from their graves, giving them life that is eternal (I Thess. 4:16–17).

Jesus “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,” demonstrating that it is to have life and immortality — man living in the body impervious to death! (II Tim. 1:10).

Life in glorious strength. Life in the image of God. “We shall be like Him (I John 3:2). Life in a perfect environment, the “new earth wherein dwells righteousness.” The present world, so fouled by sin, will be burned up and the whole creation will be restored. God will have His paradise as originally purposed (II Pet. 3:7, Rev. 2:7).

The world was perfect, exactly as God designed it, until disobedience brought it under a curse (Gen. 1:31, 3:17). Today the whole creation aches for the day of judgment and removal of all sin and death, that once more it may be GOOD in God's eyes. We

Christians also “groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:19–23).

No amount of self-esteem will convince the Judge of the earth that one is fit for this new creation. (Sorry, Mr. Schuller). It is God’s esteem that counts. It’s His creation, His purpose and His power to pull it off (Phil. 3:20–21).

If we qualify it will be because we have believed Christ and submitted ourselves to Him in faith (John 3:36, Rom. 5:1, 9).

What now? Looking forward to such a life we will try to live so we will be “found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him” (II Peter 3:14). “And every one that has this hope set on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure” (I John 3:3).

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