

DESTINY DEMONSTRATED

By

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While the death of Jesus and His resurrection are two separate events, they are essentially bound together in connection to the final destiny of all mankind. So important is that connection that the apostle Paul sums up the gospel in the fact that “Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that He was buried; and that He has been raised again on the third day...”¹

In these two historic events can be seen the ultimate destiny of each and every person. At the present hour the things that grip the attention of all the world are those things being dealt with on a massive and public scale, such as crime, abortion, the economy, education, war and homosexuality. But none of these can be dealt with properly by people who have no clear direction for their own lives.

It is only as a person has some concept of his own destiny that he is able to steer his life toward that goal. One of the main reasons for the confusion, violence and destructive trend in modern society is that man has lost sight of his ultimate goal and, like a rudderless ship at the mercy of the storm, spends his energy and life in counterproductive efforts.

There is a God-designed order of things, and every rejection of that order is a sign of rebellion against God. At the center of that order is man, created to reflect the image of God and to walk in harmony with God’s design. Each one’s life is a part of that order; therefore, sin against the Creator is not only a denial of the Creator’s order and purpose, but it amounts to a rejection of life itself, as life is possible only as the Creator gives it.

Scripture abounds in warnings to this effect. “The soul that sins it shall die,”² and “The wages of sin is death.”³ The sentence of death is prominent in Scripture, from the first warning in the garden of Eden⁴ to the final consignment of the unredeemed to the lake of fire, “which is the second death.”⁵

Such is the destiny for all the unredeemed, clearly seen in the judgment that fell upon Jesus as the Anointed One who was “made to be sin on our behalf”⁶ and “who bare our sins in his body upon the tree.”⁷ On the cross He was under the condemnation for sin. Isaiah declared, “Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.”⁸

But Christians, for the most part, have failed miserably in warning the lost of this final and irrevocable destiny. Death is a terror to man, and he will go to great extremes to deny its reality. Through the ages he has invented many systems and devised many theories to evade the simple scriptural truth that death is the destiny of the unsaved. These teachings have been incorporated into various religious systems, some of them included in the assorted creeds of Christianity.

Foremost in this assortment is the idea that death is an illusion, that the true person never dies but only passes from one form to another. Preachers ask, “Where will you spend eternity?” as if all, both saved and lost, are in possession of life that is eternal. Rather than presenting the straightforward Biblical warning of death for sin, there is offered a smorgasbord of ideas of what happens to the unredeemed, from the doctrine of

perpetual torture, as expressed by Dante and many fundamentalists, to the sophisticated concepts of C. S. Lewis. These all have one thing in common: no one is destined for final death; God will continue to give life, even to the most horrible rebel that ever cursed His name.

In the “golden text” of the Bible, Jesus states that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”⁹ The alternative to live is to perish. One can not do both at the same time. Traditionalists often claim that “perish” (Greek *Apollumi*) is used to describe ruined wineskins¹⁰ and spoiled food,¹¹ indicating that the sinner is only “ruined” by being separated from God, something short of final death. But the word appears 92 times in the New Testament, and with only a couple of exceptions, it means death, the cessation of life. The word *apollumi*, is the strongest word in the Greek language to denote a final and complete end, to bring to naught, to utterly destroy. It is the word Jesus used to solemnly declare that God can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.”¹² The same verb is used in Luke by the evil spirits who were filled with fear that Christ had come before the expected time to *destroy* them.¹³ One may note that these spirits were already “separated from God” but expected a final destruction.

There are 14 different Greek words used in the New Testament to express the doctrine of the final death of the lost. Translated to English these words mean: to consume, death, ruin, destroy utterly, expire, corrupt utterly, cut off, burn up, thoroughly abolish, etc. Dr. R.F. Weymouth, a noted Greek authority and translator of the New Testament, stated, “My mind fails to conceive a grosser misinterpretation of language than when the five or six strongest words which the Greek language possesses, signifying ‘destroy’ or ‘destruction,’ are explained to mean maintaining an everlasting but wretched existence. To translate black as white is nothing to this.”¹⁴

Inlaying down His life for sin and as a sinner, Jesus revealed the destiny of man who dies in sin and is raised to face the judgment, where the sentence will be final and irrevocable death.

Such would be the final destiny for all men, were it not for the death of Jesus, God’s Son. God, having created man to live in His glorious image, does not allow His purpose to be thwarted by sin. For the sins for which Jesus paid the penalty were not His own but ours. With no sin of His own,¹⁵ after the penalty was paid, He was free from the sentence of death. Peter proclaimed that God raised him up, “having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be held of it.”¹⁶ we, too, being free from sin’s penalty, will be raised to live in His likeness.¹⁷

To hold that the resurrection of Jesus proves that there is no death is an absurdity often heard during a certain seasonal time of the year as his resurrection is celebrated throughout the world. He claimed, “I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore.”¹⁸ It was the person, Jesus, who was resurrected, not merely the body. It is the person who dies, and the person who is resurrected.

It is equally absurd to claim that Christians go to their reward immediately at death. It is not uncommon at funerals to hear someone read the words of Jesus: “An if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to myself.”¹⁹ This text plainly says that it is at his coming, when He comes to raise the dead, that He will receive us. But often this reading is followed by the contradictory statement that the deceased one

is now enjoying the bliss of heaven in the glorious presence of Jesus and the angels. No resurrection in view at all.

Man's total life is totally under the power of God. According to R. J. Rushdoony, this was and is the offence of the doctrine of the resurrection.²⁰ He suggests that it is the lack of faith in God, or even hostility toward Him, that prompts man to hold to a doctrine that says he does not die, and thus does not have to depend on the supreme miracle of resurrection.

What the resurrection of Jesus shows is that man can and will be raised from the death to live as man again, and this is exactly what Christ and the apostles promised in their preaching.

"I am the resurrection and the life,"²¹ Jesus said, and then proceeded to raise Lazarus from the dead. Note the progression: first the resurrection, then life. "The hour is coming in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."²² All dead are to be resurrected, the unsaved to face the judgment and sentence of final death, but the redeemed to be changed to a condition of immortality and glory.²³

Christians desperately need to return to this simple message of life only in Christ, that confused and misdirected mankind might be presented with a clear view of where the path is leading and the direction he needs to take.

References

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7. I Peter 2:24
8. Isaiah 53:6, 8
9. John 3:16
10. Matthew 9:17
11. John 6:12
12. Matthew 10:28
13. Luke 4:34
14. Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers, pg. 494
15. Hebrews 4:15
16. Acts 2:24
17. I John 3:2
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19. John 14:3
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