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Mini Study

When You Die

If a man die, shall he live [again]? All the days of my warfare would I wait, Till my release should come. Thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee: Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thy hands (Job 14:14-15 ASV)

However long we may live, we are subject to both death and taxes; but it's death that can't be cheated. It is death that is perceived as the 'enemy.' Fear is also an enemy; fear of what the future holds, fear of that predicted flu' pandemic, fear of terrorism. They mean death. The thought of death barely enters the consciousness of the young, but inevitably Old Father Time knocks at our door. Is there a heaven, a hell? Is there life after life? Where is gentle Aunt Jane? And what of hard-drinking, cussin' Uncle Bill? Such thoughts trouble us.

- Every faith has its take on life beyond the grave. Religion assumes it and seeks to explain it. Indeed religion is pointless if death ends everything, a mere placebo.
- The trouble is that every faith plots its own way towards a variety of outcomes. *Islam* has its Paradise and its Hell. *Christianity* envisages Heaven and Hell and Purgatory and Limbo (though this is falling out of favor). For *Buddhists* it is Nirvana. Then there are the atheists, poor souls. Who do we believe?
- So it's refreshing to find a logical and satisfying presentation - as, contrary to belief - in the Christian Scriptures. From beginning to end - from Genesis to Revelation - there is a consistent presentation of what lies ahead for all of us when we die. It removes the fear - and instils that rare quality, *hope*.
- Virtually all religious belief about the after-life stems from the premise that tucked inside each of us is something that will live on after death - the 'soul'. It is indestructible, and gets its 'reward' as soon as we die - 'heaven or hell.' The die is cast, so to speak. Not so.
- Belief like this provokes such an obscene scenario, replicated in most faiths, as is portrayed in Dante's *Inferno* - an ever-burning fire that devours, but never totally consumes, tortured souls in 'hell.' It instils uncertainty as to the fate of a deceased loved one. It consigns infants to at best, a state of *limbo*, and most adults to *purgatory*. It envisages the 'saved' seeing their own wayward offspring forever burning. And it smears a loving God as a ghoulish monster who is content to inflict never-ending agony and torment on His created beings.
- Preachers use this concept of a fiery hell to scare their hearers to 'repentance.' But the divine plan for the salvation of mankind far transcends such devilish - Satan has inspired it - nonsense. It's a plan that was conceived in the mind of the one and only true God before any act of material creation. Humanity, created 'in the image and likeness of God' and given the opportunity to choose the lifestyle 'fit for purpose,' rather chose the way offered by the Adversary, Satan. The outcome of that choice is death - and all the suffering that

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mankind has experienced throughout the millennia since.

- The patriarch Job (*ch 14:14-15*) fingers the reality. Mankind - every man, every woman, every child - will ultimately be given the opportunity to live forever. Wrote Paul: *'And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment'* (Hebrews 9:27 ASV). Some relatively few will for important reasons have that choice in this life. Most of Earth's billions - of every nation, every era, every religion - must wait until after they die. In the meantime they will 'rest in peace' in the grave. Wrote King Solomon: *'For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing'* (Ecclesiastes 9:5).
- Jesus sums it up like this: *'Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all those in the tombs will hear His voice. And they will come out, the ones having done good into a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil into a resurrection of judgment'* (John 5:28-29 LITV). Note: their chance will come - for Jew and Gentile, male and female, Hindu and Moslem and Christian (and atheist!) - following a resurrection, a rising from the dead.
- *When?* John gives the detail: *'But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were ended. This [is] the first resurrection'* (Revelation 20:5 LITV). *'The thousand years:'* that is, the 'millennium,' the coming 1000-year era of peace presided over by Jesus in person. They live again in the flesh, their genetic imprint preserved in Heaven: *'then the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it'* (Ecclesiastes 12:7 LITV).
- In sum, there will be an orderly progression of resurrection. Jesus is the first followed at His return by those who in this life have God's Holy Spirit. They will, in spirit bodies, reign on Earth with Jesus during the Millennium. After the Millennium all others will be brought from the grave in a material body for a period of judgment and given opportunity to become members of the Family of God.

(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted.)

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