

FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

ANCIENT ANSWERS TO MODERN QUESTIONS

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The Quest For Eternal Life

A series By Charles Pope, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Is There Life After Death?

Is there life after death? This question is as old as human existence. The famous Cheops of ancient history was the designer and builder of the Great Pyramids of Egypt. Some have summarized that this man is said to be the same character we read about in the Bible called Job. In the book of Job 14:14 we read, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

The world was shocked this year by the mass suicide of 39 people in California. They decided not to wait for their "change to come" and committed self destruction in the hope of entering the "next life." They saw a new phenomenon appear in the heavens and determined it to be their vehicle for leaving this old world to be taken to the heavenly place of eternal existence!

Does this seem weird to you? It shouldn't, because it is a concept not too far removed from what most religions and churches preach and teach! Think about it, most all religions and churches teach some form of belief about leaving this old earth and this old body behind to go to heaven and be with the Lord. The basis for this belief is taken from the Bible. The Bible says many things that people try to connect with this life and the possibility of a higher level of life other than this flesh that we live in, here on earth.

Such statements as, "*We shall rise to meet Him in the air, and so we shall ever be with the Lord*" or "*He that believes on Jesus shall inherit life eternal*" lead many to hope in a another life after death. There are concepts built on words such as: Angels, Spirits, Resurrection, Eternal Life, Heaven, Hell, Judgement, Damnation, Righteousness, Unrighteousness, Good and Evil. All these terms are found in the pages of your Bible. I believe those 39 people who killed themselves, died because they fell victim to a persuasive preacher and teacher who influenced them with a confused mixture of biblical information and HUMAN reasoning! The Bible itself warns us not to fall victim to these seducing spirits.

Most people believe there is life after death. What is your concept of life after death? How have you arrived at your belief in what the purpose of physical life is and where you will spend eternity? Is what you believe about life after death based on your personal study of the information the Bible offers, or is it based on what you've heard preached and taught by preachers and teachers all your life? You need to know and understand what your Bible says

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"What Can I Do, Lord?"

By Lisa Henderson, McAlester, Oklahoma

I was frustrated. For months I had been listening to preachers telling me to use my calling to bring others into the church. But no one ever explained how I was to know what my calling was or what I was supposed to do with it once I found it. I remember one particular sermon that spurred me to action. It was a sermon about the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. I didn't fully understand how the parable of the talents applied to me, but I knew for certain that I didn't want to be the wicked and slothful servant who was cast out of God's kingdom. Thus began the search for my calling.

I began to look at what others were doing around me and ask, "What are my talents?" I tried to copy what others were doing by advertising for free literature and weekly Bible studies. But that didn't work. Everything I could think of was already being done. It seemed like the more I searched the more frustrated I became.

Finally, I did the one thing I should have done in the beginning. I prayed. There is a well known saying, "Be careful what you pray for, you just might get it." Well, I got it all right! But it wasn't at all what I was expecting. Actually, my prayer was pretty simple.

"What can I do, Lord?" That's it, just five little words. But the Lord heard my heartfelt cry to do something for Him and He answered.

It all began as something very small and ordinary. A request had been made by an inmate at the prison in McAlester, Oklahoma for

a Christian to write and provide literature to help with his Bible studies. Well, anyone can do that. It wasn't anything as big or glamorous as I had imagined, but it was something I could do. So, I did it. I never imagined it would turn into a full time ministry. It just so happened that the young man I replied to had a job running errands for other inmates and guards. So, as he worked he began to tell others, who were

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also looking for God's truth, to write me. That's how I ended up with a full time prison ministry.

What's so funny about this story is that when God answered my prayer, He also answered my mother's prayer. And my father, who wasn't even looking for something to do, was given something to do anyway! God truly does work in mysterious ways.

Since the prison ministry began, God has blessed us all in very unexpected ways. We have grown closer to God and to each other. We have become excited and enthusiastic in sharing God's truth. We have become bolder in

Christ and often find ourselves encouraging others to do something. It is exciting to see the things God is doing in each one of us as we continue in this ministry.

Christ said that His disciples would do the works that He did. I believe Luke 4:18 applies to us as much as it did to Christ. That scripture is what our ministry is all about, healing the brokenhearted, preaching deliverance to the captives, and setting at liberty those who are bruised. The men I find myself encountering are so lost, discouraged, and depressed. They know they have fallen as far as they can and they are looking for someone to show them the way out of the hole they are in.

It has always been my heartfelt desire to do something "important" for God. I have often found myself looking for something to do that would have eternal results. I truly feel privileged God has called me to participate in sharing His truth with others. To know that God is using me to bring others into His kingdom gives me such a feeling of wonder and humility. I cannot even find the words to describe it.

Are you in the same place I was? Watching others around you doing a work for God and wondering where you fit in? Wanting to do something, anything, but not knowing what? The Lord is just waiting for you to ask him. He wants to give you something to do. He just wants to know that you are willing to do it.

Take inventory of your talents. Can you read a story to a child?

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Weakness of the Law

In Romans the eighth chapter verse three we are told that the law of God can not save us. This is not because it is faulty but because of the weakness of **our flesh**. What is that weakness and what is the function of the law? In the Bible we are given many indications of what fleshly weaknesses are.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

It is the truth, our natural behavior leans itself towards unrighteousness. It is all too often easier to tell a lie rather than the truth, or cover one sin with another. But what defines sin? After all, how is a wrong action wrong if there is no measure of right? Without law there is no wrong, and indeed there is no right. Why? Because sin (wrongful doing or unrighteousness) is the transgression of the law (*I John 3:4*).

What is the law? The law is a measuring rod by which we can tell wrong from right. Without this measure we cannot fail, but neither can we achieve. When you en-

gage in a board game you play the game according to the rules. If there are no rules what piece do you move first? In what direction do you move that piece? Indeed what do you do with the dice, roll them or not? Without the rules or the law of the game you cannot lose, but neither can you win. You cannot do anything in reference to the game. Indeed there would be no game if there were no rules.

Likewise, God has given us the law, the rules if you will, to the game of life. You are free to choose - either break the rules and try to cheat, or obey the rules and win. But in this game of life cheating does not mean you lose just a game, you lose your *life*.

We are all losers without Christ. For we have all tried to cheat, and fallen short of the prize. The laws which we break have defined our actions as unrighteousness and therefore defined us as sinners. The weakness in our flesh is that we are unable to be restored by the law. The law was given so we could play the game by the rules and win outright. It is a law of life. If we followed this law it would have led us to the prize of everlasting life. Had we not sinned we would have no need of a Savior. But once we entered into sin, our hope was lost because the law was not able to rescue us from our transgression. The law cannot save us

from sin, it can only direct us to righteousness.

But while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He died so that we might live. But not as our old self, for that person has broken the rule and is destined to lose the game. Christ died so that we might escape the punishment and enter back into life as a new player. Once we enter back into life, once we are back again playing the game, what should we do? Should we cheat as before? Surely that would put us in danger again of death. Rather, we should continue in life and follow the signs of righteousness, those signs being the laws of God.

Jesus did not absolve us of our responsibility. He did not play the game in our stead. He gave us a marvelous gift, a chance to play the game again, from the start and this time play to win outright.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-4). •

"I will meditate also of all thy work and talk of thy doings."

I Can Smile Again!!

By Jean Clarke, Scarborough, Ontario

In 1989 I married someone whom I thought would bring me joy and happiness. I was a Christian and a young single female. In my eyes, all I needed now was a husband to make my life complete and put the icing on the cake; but my dreams quickly became a nightmare. He broke every single marriage vow. I tried to fast and pray asking the Lord to change him, but while I was praying my life was in constant danger because of physical abuse. My health was under constant threat because of his infidelity. Throughout these times, I sought the Lord daily. In the beginning I prayed for the Lord to change him, then I prayed for the Lord to change me, then I prayed for deliverance, till ultimately I prayed for death. I couldn't bare what life had offered a young Christian girl like me. I was not perfect, but I certainly could not see how I deserved the pain I was now living. At times I would search the scriptures for help, for encouragement, for whatever I could get out of them to give me strength to go on just one more day. Psalms 30:5 says "weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." I cried, I fasted and prayed yet with no relief in sight. Everyone I thought would stick by me throughout these troubled times left me alone, to suffer alone. I tried to hold on and the Lord honored that because one day

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in 1994, the healing began. The Lord Jesus did it in His own time. I thought I would not make it. I thought I would die in this time of testing and trial, but the Lord delivered me from my distresses. He gave me a new life and a new song.

Listen to me if you are young, middle aged or old. **Trust in God. He will see you through.** The night seems long, dark and dreary. The trials and testing are breaking your back and your will; but lean on Jesus. With your back bent, lean on Jesus. With tears in your eyes, lean on Jesus. When the tears obscure your view, lean on Jesus. With darkness before you and night behind you, lean on Jesus. Even though your prayers seem to be curses, lean on Jesus. Continue praying! Continue fasting! Continue going to church! Don't Stop, **Don't Stop.** Nothing lasts forever, nothing but salvation. The Lord has to try us to prove us. Many times I sit and with tears in my eyes, I ask the Lord, "why, why, did you put me through such a terrible experience?" I can only get my answer loud and clear when a friend calls me to say, "I didn't want to go to

"When I see all you have been through and you are still holding on, it gives me the strength and courage to go on"

church today, but when I remembered you and how you continued going to church no matter what, I had to go." Or when someone says to me, "Girl, because of you, I know I can face this situation in my life," or just to hear someone say, "When I see all you have been through and you are still holding on, it gives me the strength and courage to go on." To put it simply, I can now encourage others because I have the experience. I am not assuming or trying to understand how they feel. I can relate with my own personal experience. It was not easy getting here, but I am here.

My testing and trials were tough, but thank God, with His help, I stuck it out and He did bless me in the end. The Lord delivered me from all my oppression and gave me a new life and a bright new smile. **I can smile again! Praise God! I can smile again! •**

*"Trust in the LORD
with all thine heart; and lean
not unto thine own
understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge
him, and he shall direct thy
paths."
Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV)*

God Has Feelings Too

By Renee Steel, Tulsa, Oklahoma

I have always wondered what God thinks about things. What does He think about the choices we make? How does He feel when we do something good? How does He feel when we do something not-so-good?

Our God is a God of great emotion, which is not surprising since we were created in His image and we are often creatures of great emotional capability.

God has been known to demonstrate tremendous love and mercy, as well as anger and jealousy when appropriate.

In Jeremiah 31:3 God says to His chosen people Israel, *"I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you"* (NKJ).

He had such great love for the people He chose to call His own, it's not surprising that He also exhibited intense jealousy and even anger when His chosen people rejected Him to go after other gods. These emotions are clear in

Deuteronomy 32:21-23, *"They have made me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in my anger ... I will heap misfortunes on*

them; I will use my arrows on them" (NASV).

If this sounds somewhat like a jealous husband it's understandable. God had taken Israel as His bride and she was leaving Him! *"Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the Lord* Jeremiah 3:20 (NKJ).

If Israel (the physical seed of Abraham) was God's bride anciently, then it stands to reason that those who are Abraham's seed today, spiritually (Galatians 3:29) would be God's bride as well. This is why Paul said he wanted to present the Corinthian Christians, indeed all Christians, as a chaste virgin to Christ, the church's betrothed husband.

Given this marriage analogy then, it is not difficult to understand the relationship we each have with Jesus, as members of His church and as His future bride.

I knew a man once who had such emotional intensity that when he got upset nobody wanted to be anywhere near him. Even his dog went into hiding! But because he had the capacity for such displays of emotion, that same man was one of the most compassionate I have ever

known.

Even though God has the capacity to get so angry at a wanton wife that He will heap misfortunes on her, His intensity is just as great when bestowing blessings on those who love Him. In fact, He even warned us of His emotional intensity in Deuteronomy 5:9-10, *"For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments"* (NKJ).

Just as in any marriage relationship, both parties have to be giving 100 percent to make it work. God already gave everything at Calvary. Yet, just as in a marriage, the more we give to Him, the more He wants to give us.

I've seen this principle at work in my own marriage. The more loving and giving my husband is to me, the more I want to give in return. How much more does God want to bless us when He sees our love for Him through our actions?

In many cases, conversion brings with it an array of emotions. How did you feel when you first realized that because of Jesus' sacrifice you could be free of the guilt and turmoil caused by sin? How do you think God felt toward you when you made the commitment to follow Him no matter what the personal cost?

He wants to bless you! He says so in Mark 10:29-30, *"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has*

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"I knew a man once who had such emotional intensity that when he got upset nobody wanted to be anywhere near him. Even his dog went into

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about this life and any future life you may be able to experience! Your Bible says to “prove all things” and hold only to the beliefs that are true of God’s spiritual reasoning, not some man’s human reasoning about what God says! (See I Thessalonians 5:21)

What if I told you that you are not going to Heaven when you die? What if I told you, Christ is coming to this earth and bringing the Kingdom of Heaven with Him! Could you prove me to be wrong? Maybe I should first ask if you consider the Bible to be the foundational source for truth. The Bible is used by some as a flag to carry around while they preach and teach their own purpose. This is what causes frustration and confusion in the minds of many about churches and religion.

There is spiritual life available for us after the death of this “earthen vessel” which now is the temple of our “human spirit.” To understand life after death takes a lot of research and careful study of the Bible. It is comparable with what science has discovered about the processes generated in our physical brain by the organic exchange of nutrients via the blood and oxygen which sustains our thoughts and presence of mind telling us who we are. This sounds complicated, but only if we resist the simple belief that God created this process for a higher purpose! We are living in this flesh to learn and practice the higher ways of God’s lifestyle. Our physical existence is the first phase of God’s plan to create a family of spirit beings to share the universe with the God family and the angels!

To be continued . . .

(Continued from page 2) - **What Can I Do**

Can you write a letter for an elderly person? Can you speak in front of a crowd, sing a song, turn a stranger into a friend? Whatever talents you have, no matter how small, God can use them. He wants to use them. Ask God to show you your talents and send something your way. Then diligently apply yourself to whatever He sends your way. It may turn into something you never expected. •

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left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time -- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life" (NKJ).

Until I got married I never fully understood this scripture, but I think I do now. Since my husband is from another country, we had to decide which of us would emigrate. In the end, economic opportunity dictated that he would settle here in the United States. The fact that he left his mother, father, sister, brother, and the only home he had ever known has created an emotional impact on my heart that will forever remind me of his love.

It is a joy beyond words to be loved so much that a person would voluntarily choose to give up everything for you.

This is the joy that Jesus has given to each of us because He gave everything for our salvation. This is the joy that we can give Him every day of our lives by putting Him first. •

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