

Were We Created to Live for Eternity?

To answer that question we first have to see how each of us is made. In Genesis 2:7 it says, *"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."* He was made a perfect man from the dust of the ground, but he did not become "alive" until the breath of "life" (spirit) was breathed into him. Then man became a living soul. It was the breath of life that allowed him to live. This breath of life is also called the **Spirit of God** and it is also referred to by many people as the **living soul**. It is the spirit or soul that makes man distinct from the animal world and makes man unique among all of God's creation (see 1 Thess. 5:23). With the spirit, man became God-conscious and that allows man to know, understand and have communion with God.

This is confirmed and referenced in Job 32:8, *"But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding."* This is also referenced in Revelation 11:11-12, *"Now after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them."*

God's great desire was to have communion and fellowship with man, so He created man and placed him in a "material" world. For man to communicate and have a tangible relationship with the physical world, God created man with a "physical" body capable of such communication. However, because God is "Spirit" (John 4:24), man was able to communicate with God in spirit because at creation God placed the spirit of man within his body.

Man, a "living soul," stood between two worlds and belonged to both. Through his body, man was linked to the visible, material, and earthly world around him and through his spirit he was linked to the spiritual, eternal, and heavenly world of God Himself.

What happens when you cross over from DEATH to LIFE?

God warned Adam in Genesis 2:17, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it; for in that day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* God instructed Adam not to partake of the *"tree of the knowledge of good and evil"* and then goes on to tell him that he would *"die the day that he ate of it."*

Adam's "death" was brought on by his sin and disobedience; but what kind of death was it? The day Adam disobeyed God, and "died" as a result of his disobedience, he did NOT die physically, because he lived for 930 years beyond that day. If Adam's death was not physical then how did Adam "die" on that day he disobeyed God?

When Adam disobeyed God, he was driven out of the Garden of Eden from the presence of the Lord; so that the fellowship and communication between him and God was broken. Therefore, the "death" that God warned Adam about, if he disobeyed Him, was Adam's separation from God. This "death" of man's spirit; spiritual separation from God, is the real "death" of man as far as God is concerned. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of "spiritual death," it means "the separated state of living souls from God." Even though man is physically alive, he is regarded as "spiritually dead," unless he is joined to God, through Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 2:1, in referring to their former separated state from God, Paul speaks of those who were *"dead in trespasses and sins."* They had physical life and yet they were regarded as "dead."

Paul's use of the term "dead" has to do with the separation of living souls from God.

Man, who is created for God, is regarded as lost unless he is united with God. This is where the expression "lost" and "saved" come from. A man is lost until he is reconciled or joined to God. A man is not lost himself, but, rather he is lost to God and to God's purpose for his life. God made man for Himself and when God and man are separated from each other, man is "spiritually dead."

There is a state of dis-union between man and God.

Romans 6:23 states, "*The wages of sin is death (separation from God)... but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" This gift of God; this gift of "LIFE," is the gift of Jesus Christ, because it is Jesus who restores man to God. It is because this reunion (reconciliation) between God and man is accomplished by Jesus Christ so that He can say, "*I am the life.*"

In order for God to save man and to fulfill His purpose within man, more was required than His simple offer of forgiveness.

Redemption goes far beyond the idea of God just forgiving man because God's forgiveness alone could not begin to accomplish the kind of reconciliation that God sought for man. Unfortunately, many in churches today are tempted to think of God's salvation for man in terms of His forgiveness alone.

Man's separation from God is due, in the first place, to the depraved nature that man acquires as a result of being born in the line of Adam's race. Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden effected a change in Adam's nature, a change in Adam himself and as "heirs," all men became the enemies of God by NATURE. In Ephesians 2:3; Paul, when speaking of being "*dead in trespasses and sins,*" states, "*that we were by nature children of wrath.*"

It is because man inherits Adam's depraved nature, and therefore

needs to have his nature changed. And God in the saving of mankind does involve more than just His forgiving man, because God's forgiveness alone does not change a person's nature.

Man's depraved, sinful nature makes him an enemy of God. It separated him from God. That is why man's nature must be changed if he is to be reconciled to God. Since man cannot change his nature, it is God who must change man's nature by doing something within man.

It is because God had to deal with man's nature that Jesus came to earth as God in human form, born of a virgin and not from the seed of man. Jesus came to do two important things on behalf of man:

1. Christ Jesus came to reveal to man just how much God loves man and how desperately He desires to forgive him of his sins. Jesus came to pay the debt penalty for man's sins. Jesus came to die in man's place for man's sins, in order that man could go free from the debt of his sins. After His resurrection, Jesus Christ became our High Priest, and through Him, man could now have access to the very throne of God.

2. Jesus came to provide man with a new and righteous nature so that man could be conformed into the image of Himself and be equipped for eternity with a righteous God. Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us. Romans 3:21-22 tells us that this righteous salvation is not obtained on the basis of law- keeping but is obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul reveals this blessed truth, *"that the One (Jesus) who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we who knew no righteousness might become the righteousness of God in Him."* You've heard of this expression, "What makes you think you're so righteous?" My answer to that question has been, "I'm not righteous that's why I need Christ Jesus."

Man is a sinner because of his nature, and it is because of his sinful nature that he is separated from God. Therefore, if a man is to be eligible for eternal fellowship with God, he must be redeemed by, personally inviting the Lord, Jesus Christ to come into his life.

Upon this invitation, Jesus Christ brings about the needed changes that enable him to have fellowship and union with God.

God will not impose Himself upon anyone. John 1:12 states, *"To as many as will receive Him gives He power to become the sons of God."* God is willing to come into anyone's heart and to create, within him, a whole new nature that is able to communicate and fellowship with Him.

Christ Jesus whom we invite into our hearts and who comes to live in us; is God! This means that, at the very moment of our invitation, we are unified with God in a literal union. And if "life" means union with God as we have seen that it does; then we can now comprehend how the gift of "spiritual life" becomes ours by the receiving of Jesus Christ into our lives. Plainly, salvation is crossing over from "death" to "life." Salvation is really receiving the "life" of Christ.

Were we created to live for eternity?

The answer to that question is a resounding "YES." According to Scripture, this is what happens when a man physically dies! Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, *"Then the dust will return to the earth (this is the body), and the spirit or the soul returns to God that gave it."* Everything goes into reverse. Man's breath (the spirit) leaves his body and returns to God and man's physical body returns to the earth and later becomes dust. There are two different entities making up the human being. There is the spiritual body and the physical body. We have to keep both of these in mind when discussing death, because at death each of these entities takes a different path.

The Bible tells us that the body is the "house" in which our spirit or soul lives. Our bodies are not really us; it is just a house in which our soul lives. We can understand this because we live in a house. The house is not us; it is just the place where we live. If the house that you lived in burnt to the ground so all that was left was dust and ashes, would you not move to another home? The same is true with your spirit or soul once your physical human body dies.

What happens when a believer dies? His soul goes to be with the Lord. The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:8, *"That when we are absent from our bodies we are present with the Lord."* At our physical death everyone's soul or spirit goes back to God. Ezekiel 18:4 tells us exactly who "owns" your soul. *"Behold, all souls are Mine."* **Every person's soul who was ever born throughout the history of mankind: believer or non-believer; belongs to God and will return to God upon man's physical death.**

At the very instant of death the spirit is received by God while the human physical body stays here and begins to decay and turn to dust. The spiritual part of man survives death and continues to have consciousness and identity. It is the spirit or soul of a saved believer that rejoices at the death of the body. This was so important for us to know that Jesus made sure to tell us. In fact, the very last words that Jesus spoke before He died on the cross told us that. *"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, Father, into your hands I commit My spirit. Having said this, He breathed His last (Luke 23:46)."*

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that, *"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."* Here Paul is simply telling us that if we only knew what lay ahead for us in death we would welcome death with open arms. That is also why the apostle Paul said, *"For me to live is*

Christ and to die is gain." Why did he say that it was "gain" to die? Because to die is to go to be with Christ and it is far better than being here.

Death is not the tragic final act in this drama we call life, but instead death is a glorious homecoming to our Heavenly Father and to our loved ones who have gone before us. Psalm 116: 15 puts it so beautifully when it says, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His faithful ones."* The death of a faithful one is precious to the Lord because through death that loved one is now in the very presence of God the Father. That loved one is home in the arms of Almighty God.

We should not be surprised that the Bible tells true believers that they should look upon death almost as a special gift. Only death can give us the gift of eternity. That is why Christ could say, *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him (GOD) who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* The body might temporarily be in the possession of cancer or heart disease or find itself in any number of other horrible death dealing circumstances, but these enemies cannot prevent the soul or spirit from going to God.

When Stephen was about to die he did not ask for the grave to receive him, but said, *"Lord Jesus receive my spirit (Acts 7:59)!"* Clearly he was not looking forward to an unconscious existence but awaited the immediate bliss of heaven in fellowship with Christ and the Father.

To die as a believer is to go home to heaven. To live here is like existing in a foreign country. This world is not our home. In Romans 12:2, Paul urges us *"not to be conformed to this world."* The word "world" used here means the society or system that man has built in order to make himself happy without God. It is a kingdom that is antagonistic to God. The god and prince of this

world is Satan. All unconverted people are his subjects. He seeks to attract and hold people through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The world has its own politics, art, music, religion, amusements, thought-patterns, and lifestyles, and it seeks to get everyone to conform to its culture and customs. It hates non-conformists, like Christ and His followers.

We have to remember that we are in this world but we're not of this world. *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (1 John 3:1)."* Someday we'll understand this distinction much better but for now the future is ours by faith. Believers go directly into the presence of Christ at death. They are conscious and in command of all their faculties. As the great evangelist D. L. Moody said before he died, "Soon you will read in the papers that Moody is dead. Don't believe it. For in that moment I will be more alive than I have ever been."

All human life comes from God, who gave it, and all things depend on God who created all things; whether a person recognizes these facts to be true or not, these facts are reality. For the believer and follower of Jesus Christ, new joys come after death. Only through death can we go to be with God.

So we can say that death has two faces. To the unbeliever the very thought of death is terrifying or at least it should be, but for those who have made their peace with God, death is a blessing because death is a means of redemption, a doorway into an existing and joyous adventurous eternity with God the Father and Jesus. When the final curtain parts for every one of us, nothing can keep us from answering His summons. A few seconds after we die we will either be ELATED or TERRIFIED. Then, it will be too late to reroute your travel plans or to make amends.

In summary, we can see plainly from Scripture that God has made every one of us for all eternity! It is God's divine intention that all men should spend eternity with Him and, while it is true that not all will, God appeals to all men to come unto Him. Man was made in God's image and the future fellowship in eternity will be one in which eternal beings enjoy the presence of God and one another for all eternity.

God gave man dominion over the earth. All the fruit of the trees was his to enjoy except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was God's TEST upon man to remind man that God was to be the Lord of his life and that His will was supreme. It revealed the fact that Adam was responsible to God, His Creator. It teaches us again that we are all responsible to God. This fact was taught in the Garden of Eden and whether we believe it or not or whether we accept it or not we are still accountable to God and one day we shall give an account to God.

According to **John 5:28-29**; physical death is not the end of man's existence. It wasn't God's intention to create man to live short focused, small agenda lives, but to create man and to place His SPIRIT inside of man with the intent that man would live and have fellowship with Him forever. You have to understand that God is spirit and spirit cannot die. God cannot die and neither can God's Spirit in man die.

We are not annihilated as so many falsely think. Don't fall for Satan's lie: "Don't worry; after death you cease to exist." No man is created just to come into this world and to die here! Man is not created just for the experience of earth but, rather, he is created for eternity. Every person comes into the world as an eternal, immortal soul who has been made for eternity and accountable to God.

"Then the dust (body) will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7)." The instant after our physical death our spirit returns to God, the Judge of all. In the case of a BELIEVER it's to be with God for all eternity. But in the case of an UNBELIEVER, the spirit goes to Hades; there to await the Great White Throne Judgment of God (Rev. 20:12-14) and then later to be sent to a place of everlasting conscious punishment (Matt. 25:46), a place originally prepared for Satan, where unbelievers are separated from God for all eternity. The solemn truth is that every person who has ever lived or will ever live falls into one of these two classes: **"LIFE"** or **"CONDEMNATION"** (John 5:29).

The choice is yours to make while you're still alive, as to what will be your final destination!

Question: "Is there any reason why you would not be willing to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?"