

SO - YOU ARE DEAD, NOW WHAT?

Eternity

Isa. 43:13 (TLB) - From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do.

Job 36:26 (TLB) - No one can begin to understand eternity.

A man dies and goes to Heaven. He gets to meet GOD and asks GOD if he can ask him a few questions. "Sure," GOD says, "Go right ahead". "OK," the man says. "Why did you make women so pretty?" GOD says, "So you would like them." "OK," the guy says. "But how come you made them so beautiful?" "So you would LOVE them", GOD replies. The man ponders a moment and then asks, "But why did you make them such airheads?" GOD says, "So they would love you!"

A priest and a taxi driver both died and went to heaven. St. Peter was at the Pearly gates waiting for them. 'Come with me', said St. Peter to the taxi driver. The taxi driver did as he was told and followed St. Peter to a mansion. It had anything you could imagine from a bowling alley to an olympic size pool. 'Wow, thank you', said the taxi driver. Next, St. Peter led the priest to a rugged old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television set. 'Wait, I think you are a little mixed up', said the priest. 'Shouldn't I be the one who gets the mansion? After all I was a priest, went to church every day, and preached God's word.' 'Yes, that's true. But during your sermons people slept. When the taxi driver drove, everyone prayed.'

Lets pray...

Arthur Stace, (Put up Pic of Arthur Stace and leave it up through whole story) an Australian born into a life of hopelessness at the turn of the century. His life was that of a bum filled with petty crime and alcoholism between the First World War and the Great Depression. All this changed when he met Jesus on August 6, 1930, and soon afterward heard his pastor cry, "I wish I could shout eternity through all the streets of Sydney!" He felt driven to make this cry a reality.

Arthur would rise early each morning, pray for an hour, and leave his home between 5:00 and 5:30 A.M., to go wherever he felt God led him. For hours he would write one word, eternity, approximately every hundred feet on the sidewalks of Sydney. For more than twenty years his work was a mystery. Who was writing this single word that caused countless thousands to pause and ponder its meaning, both immediate and long range? Had this mystery man captured the impact and portion of this single word's power? It wasn't until 1956 that the puzzle was solved.

Two years after Arthur's death in 1967, Sydney poet Douglas Stewart published these words and immortalized the word of this graffiti preacher:

*That shy mysterious poet Arthur Stace
Whose work was just one single mighty word
Walked in the utmost depths of time and space
And there his word was spoken and he heard
ETERNITY, ETERNITY, it banged him like a bell*

A one-word sermon touched a nation. His message was secured for generations by architect Ridley Smith, who put it in copperplate in the Sydney Square. It was later viewed by over 4 billion souls worldwide as they watched by television the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Olympics, and again when it was emblazoned in fireworks on the Sydney Harbor Bridge on the Eve of the new millennium.

Eternity arrests the attention of all mankind. No race, tribe, or gender can resist its draw. We were created with eternity in our hearts and sense the immanent unknown extension of our existence. Therefore, it's wise to delve deeper into what our Creator says concerning eternity; after all, His word states, **"From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do" (Isa. 43:13, TLB)."**

Eternity and death are uncomfortable but necessary topics...

One of the points where there is a significant, long-lasting intersection of the interests of many philosophers with the interests of many people of all kinds and conditions concerns the nature and significance of death and eternity. How should we understand the mortality of all living things and, closer to home, how should we understand our own mortality? Is it possible for persons to survive biological death? This is a topic that has occupied both analytic and continental philosophy in the twentieth and twenty first century.

In ancient Western philosophy, Plato affirmed both a pre-natal life of the soul and the soul's continued life after the death of the body. In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates presents reasons why a philosopher should even welcome death (albeit not permitting or encouraging suicide), because of its emancipation of the souls of those who are good in this life to a great afterlife. In the work of Epictetus, on the other hand, death is conceived of as a person's ceasing to be. Epictetus does not argue that we should welcome death but he holds that we should not fear death because we will not exist after death. The philosophical assessment of the truth of such matters continues on to the present, as does debate on the implications of whether we may survive death.

People fear death... The fear is as ancient as civilization's oldest surviving records. The hero of the Epic of Gilgamesh writhes in agony at the prospect of spending eternity groveling in dust being eaten by worms.

The rich today are seeking ways to escape death, chasing after the famous "fountain of youth"...

Why talk about Eternity??

• **WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT DEATH AND ETERNITY WILL DETERMINE HOW YOU LIVE.**

- **Atheist** - believe that at death, it's over. There is no eternity, and so if you are an atheist, you just believe you're dead, you're worm, dirt, you are pushing daisies, and there's no reason to live with an eternal motivation.
- **Purgatory** – Believe that when you die you go to a holding place and you can be prayed out...
- **Islam** - teaches that at the end, Allah will judge the works of those who have gone before. If your good works outweigh your bad, you'll go to paradise. If your bad works outweigh your good, you'll, you'll go to hell.
- Some believe you become **angels** – big fat bald, naked babies with wings floating on clouds playing harps.
- Some believe you become **ghost**
- **Reincarnation** – When you die you come back as something else based on your behavior on the earth.

AGAIN, WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT DEATH AND ETERNITY WILL DETERMINE HOW YOU LIVE!

You say, "well I'm not going to worry about it right now..." you might rethink that because a recent study has shown that 1 out of every 1 people die!

Reminds me of a politician that died and meets a spirit...The spirit tells him that, rather than being judged for his sins, he gets to choose whether he goes to heaven or hell. The politician replies that of course he wants to go to heaven. The spirit tells him that before he chooses, he has to visit both places so each one will get a fair chance.

First they visit heaven. It looks pretty nice. Big fluffy clouds, angels singing and playing harps, everyone seeming to enjoy themselves. The politician is pleased, if a bit underwhelmed.

Hell, on the other hand, is magnificent. It's the most beautiful place the politician has ever seen, and everyone there is having the time of their lives. It has a buffet table filled with delicious-smelling food, a beautiful garden, a pool with a water slide, a dance floor, a massage parlor, and innumerable other attractions. It makes heaven look dull and boring and comparison.

“I can’t believe I’m saying this,” says the politician, “but I think I’d rather go to hell!” “Very well,” says the spirit. “Turn around.” When the politician turns around, though, hell appears to be completely different than it had been less than a minute ago. All of the attractions are gone, everything is on fire, and the people are screaming in agony.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT DEATH?

The only thing important is what the Bible teaches about death...

1) DEATH IS CERTAIN.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:27-28

2) THE SOUL AND THE BODY SEPARATE.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

...He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25-26

3) YOU WILL FACE THE JUDGMENT.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment... Hebrews 9:27

- **GREAT WHITE THRONE.**

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it...And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-12, 15

- **JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.**

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. Romans 14:10b

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

- **Incorruptible Crown** - for those seeking maturity in Christ.

1 Cor. 9:25-27 - (KJV) - ⁵ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.²⁶ I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: ²⁷ But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

1. Those who study and pray
2. Those who attend church
3. Those who get involved in growth groups

- **Crown of Righteousness** - for those who know this world isn't their home.

2 Tim 4:8 – ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

1. Not focused on possessions, but on possessing him

- **Crown of Rejoicing** – Soul winners crown

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 - ¹⁹ For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

1. Some of you will have that crown because you brought someone to church with you today.
2. Some of you won't because you are caught up in you Christian circle and never share Jesus with anyone.
3. If you share you have part in every soul that eventually receives.

- **Crown of Glory** – for those who care for others

1 Pet 5:2-4 - ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

1. Pastors
2. Leaders
3. Nursery workers
4. Children ministry volunteers
5. Deacons

- **Crown of Life** – for those who endure trials and stay faithful to Jesus.

James 1:12 - ¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

This passage in Corinthians sums up the Judgment seat of Christ:

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 - *(A person's) work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*

1. How does your belief about eternity affect the way you live today?
2. Reread 1 Cor 3:13-15. If you died today and stood at the judgment seat of Christ, when your works and motives are revealed, would you feel good about your life? Why or why not?
3. Since you still have an opportunity to change, what is God showing you to do differently?