

B_ORD_28_2018

In our Gospel Jesus gives us a vivid picture of His return at the end of the world, coming in the clouds with great power & glory, ...dispatching His angels to gather up all the faithful from the four corners of the earth... I could preach about the end of the world,....& about how Jesus wants us to be on guard & prepared because no one but the Father knows the day nor the hour...But, since this same Gospel theme comes up in two weeks, I thought today I would preach on a related topic that we don't preach on very often, ...NOT the end of the world, ...but **our own end**...What happens to us when our earthly life is over, whether at our death, or at the end of the world?...I'm going to look at two questions.The first is: *Will we go on living after we die or is this life all there is?* ...Have you ever had times when you weren't real sure about the answer?... I suspect we all have.

When I'm talking with someone who is wrestling with this question,... I usually try to help them by reminding them of what St. Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth who did NOT believe in the resurrection of the dead...He basically said that if we have placed our hopes in Christ **only** for this life we're living now,...then we should be pitied because, then, what's the big deal? ...Why did Jesus even bother to come, ...when He could've just kept on enjoying His cushy life in heaven? Why did He come? Well let's walk through it step by step...

First,- from the beginning of history – God gave the human race chance after chance, yet it continually failed to follow God's will & accept G.'s goodness...Because the world's relationship with God had been severely ruptured by sin,...God sent His Son to preach repentance, mercy & unconditional love,...to heal the sick & raise the dead,...to take a lot of flak from the religious leaders for hanging around with sinners, ...to let Himself be sold for a few pieces of silver by one of His closest friends,....be condemned on false charges,... lashed with whips,...crowned with thorns,... and nailed to a bloody cross...& to die like a common criminal.

Now why would Jesus leave heaven to come & go through all of that?...Why? ..Was it so that we might live for 60, 70, 80, maybe 90 years, & then PFFT!... that would be the end of us forever?...If death is the absolute end,...if we die & are nothing forever after,.. then Christ was a fool,...& His cross was a senseless, pointless tragedy...He should've stayed at home!....It makes no sense. It contradicts the very words of Jesus: "I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly."..."Whoever eats of this bread will live forever." ..."The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life."...Jesus Christ defeated death not for Himself, but for you & me...

Ok, so God created us to live forever...Now here's the 2nd question: *If we go on living forever, what sort of life will it be?*...I'll bet we all have thought about that one, right? I remember growing up with all sorts of images of heaven, purgatory and hell,...like jumping from cloud to cloud with the angels...or a raging fire tended by creature with horns & pitchforks...I can't say I've advanced very far from those early imaginings...I think we all have to admit ignorance of what afterlife will really be like...St. Paul tells us as much in 1 Cor.: "No **eye has seen, nor ear has heard**, nor the human heart conceived, what God **has** prepared for those who love Him."

We can only imagine what heaven is like...For me, I see heaven as a state of being more ALIVE than we've ever been before. ...Can you recall a time when you felt so gloriously alive that you almost couldn't stand it, ...like when you saw your baby for the very first time,...when you got that big promotion,...when the Dodgers beat the Yankees in the world series, when you married the love of your life?...Whatever it was, multiply that joy by a zillion zillion, & you still won't come close to the joy of life without end in heaven