

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE DIE?

2 Corinthians 5:1-8

INTRODUCTION: Wow! It has been quite a week! What a great time God has given us in VBS! I thank each of you who have been a part of it – teachers, workers, participants, parents, grandparents. Thank you for doing your part to make VBS happen in the lives of children, youth, and adults.

You know, there are four big questions that most of us, maybe all of us, ask about life.

1. **How did it all begin?** The universe, life, everything.
2. **What went wrong?**
 - I mean we look around and it is pretty clear that things are broken:
 - governments, not just ours but all around the world; institutions, businesses, even churches, organizations, even little ones like the homeowners association;
 - and people are broken – we know something of our own brokenness, weaknesses, and failures, but we notice even more the brokenness and failures of others around us;
 - but even the universe itself is broken. Scientists call it the Universal Law of Decay. So everything wears out, deteriorates. The once perfect car needs new tires, then a new battery, then a new starter, and water pump, and air conditioner. Eventually even the door handles fall off. We live in a broken world, so what went wrong?
3. **How can things be fixed?** Is there a solution?
 - Can the brokenness in me be fixed? Can what is wrong inside that shows sometimes on the outside be repaired. Can the damage done in the past be mended? Is there hope for better things tomorrow?
 - Can other people be fixed? Is there a solution to greed, racism, hatred, selfishness that just keeps things around us in a mess?
 - And while we're asking, is there a solution to the physical brokenness of the universe, or will a dying sun or a wayward meteor be the end of our asking any more questions?
4. **How does it all end?**
 - The first part of this question for each of us personally is what happens when I die?

- But the larger question is what happens ultimately to this world, to the universe, to everything?
- And the answer to that question has personal application as well. Will I be part of what ultimately happens or will I just have ceased to exist? If I am a part of it all, in what way will I be a part? Is it going to be good? Very good? Or will it be bad? Terrible? What happens in the end?

Did you know that discovering the answers to those questions is really what Vacation Bible School is all about? You may be thinking, "Well that is a pretty deep curriculum for my seven year old!"

And yes, it is. But offering an answer, a clear answer, to each of those four questions is what the Bible is about. It is actually impossible to teach or learn the message of the Bible without hearing God's answers to those questions.

Now, just as those four questions can be broken into a lot of smaller questions, each of the answers has a lot of parts as well. In fact, to give you the complete answer to each question, I would have to read you the whole Bible; and you might want me to pause now and then to give some explanation.

Obviously I cannot do that this morning. But let me give you the short answer the Bible gives to each of those questions, and this is what we learn and teach in Vacation Bible School or any other time we teach and learn from the Scriptures.

- 1. How did it all begin?** **In the beginning, God created everything.**
And by the way, after God finished, it all worked perfectly. Nothing was broken, not the people, not the animals, not inanimate things on the earth, not the things out in space. Everything worked perfectly and in perfect harmony.
- 2. What went wrong?** **Sin, disobedience to God, began.** It began in a beautiful but rebellious angel, quickly spread to the first people, and then it spread to all of their descendants. Not only were people broken but their disobedience to the King of the Universe who made them caused everything else in the universe to begin to decay and die. That is the way things still are, and the presence of sin in our world is the reason all of us see so clearly that our world is broken.
- 3. How can things be fixed?** Here's the good news. In fact the Bible calls it the gospel. **Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to our world and died on a cross to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. He offers forgiveness for our sins and eternal life to those who will trust Him as Lord and Savior.**

4. How does it all end?

Wow! Talk about a lot of parts, this answer has a lot of parts, and they are fascinating to explore. The Bible gives far more detail about this answer than most people realize, because the answers are not all organized the way I have organized them on this slide for you. But there is a short answer, a basic answer to the question of how it all ends.

Jesus returns to the earth and restores everything to its original perfection, enlarges it, and establishes it in its perfect condition forever. Those who trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord during their lives will be a part of that final, perfect universe.

They will live their lives in peace and harmony with their Creator and Lord and with all the others who trusted Him, and they will continue to live in this perfect state forever and forever.

Those who would not trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior will also continue forever, but theirs will be a horrible existence of pain, suffering, and sorrow in the Lake of Fire.

Now, I understand, there may be some of you that are thinking, I don't agree with all of that. I don't agree with some of those answers. I understand. And this morning, I am not trying to persuade you to agree. These are not answers I have come up with. I do believe these answers are true, but they did not originate with me. I am just telling you, this is what the Bible says, and I can demonstrate that clearly from this book.

When you read it all, cover to cover, those are the answers the Bible gives to these important questions we all ask. And since the Bible makes an internal claim to being the Word of God, and since it gives irrefutable evidence that the claim is true, that it really is the Word of God, your disagreement is not with me or the church. Your disagreement is with God. Only you can work that out.

Fathers, it being Father's Day, I want to make an appeal to you. You and I just as men, as people, ask these questions for ourselves and the answers that we come to are critically important to how we live our lives. But what I would ask you to consider this morning is that these questions are important to every member of your family: wife, children, and grandchildren, even parents and siblings – people you care about. And as the head of your family, you have both the privilege and the responsibility to help your kids discover the right answers to these questions, because the answers they settle into will impact their lives and their eternity.

And you single moms, while you are not dad, if your kids don't have a dad in their life who is doing this, then this privilege and responsibility falls to you. And all you moms,

even if dad is doing this, you share in this privilege and responsibility. You need those answers as much as he does, and your kids need both of you to help them come to the answers.

Now that said, I want to come back to the fourth question and take you to a Scripture many of us read this week because we are reading through the New Testament. So Friday we read 2 Corinthians 5, and it is a passage that specifically addresses the question **what happens to a believer after he dies?** What happens when a person who has trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior dies? That is just a part of the final big question, but it is a part all of us should be very interested in. This is one of the places in the Bible that the answer is given.

2 Corinthians 5:1–8

1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

For those of us who have invited Jesus to be the Lord and Master of our lives, what we learn here is of great comfort and joy. And if you have not yet trusted in Christ, this promise of one of 10,000 reasons why you should trust Him today before you leave this place.

What happens to a believer after he dies?

I. THE BELIEVER WILL GET A NEW BODY!

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Who doesn't want a new body? The longer we live in our temporary house, our tent, the more worn and broken it becomes. But God promises believers that they will get a new resurrection body, like the body of Jesus when He came out of the tomb! It will be a body not made by procreation, passing on the effects of sin across generations, but a body made directly by God. It will never wear out! It will never get worn down. It will never get sick. It will never die.

II. THE BELIEVER WILL GET A NEW LIFE!

2 Corinthians 5:4 For **we who are in this tent groan**, being burdened, not because **we want to be unclothed**, but **further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.**

The believer not only gets a new body but gets to live in that body in a whole new life! I have taught those of you who have attended a while some of the detail of what our lives are going to be like when we live for eternity with the Lord. We are not going to become chubby little angels with baby faces and stubby wings sitting on clouds playing harps! Life will be full of meaning and purpose and relationships. We will have jobs to do, but not work that is only performed for a paycheck to keep food on the table, but work that is both challenging and rewarding. Life will be full of industrious productivity and the relationships we have with the Lord and each other will exceed even the most meaningful and beautiful of relationships now. It will be a wonderful life!

III. THE BELIEVER WILL GET TO FULFILL GOD'S PLAN!

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now **He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.**

Folks, for us to live in resurrection bodies with Him has been God's purpose all along! Redeeming us through faith in Christ is not plan B after plan A did not work! God is honored and glorified that after people made in His image rebelled against Him, that He redeemed them to Himself, and giving them eternal life in bodies fit for eternity, they shall live gladly with Him, loving and praising Him forevermore. And for now, He has given us the Holy Spirit to live inside of us as a taste of what is to come and as a guarantee that God will make it happen.

IV. THE BELIEVER WILL GET TO LIVE WITH GOD HIMSELF!

2 Corinthians 5:8 **We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**

Paul here gives his personal conclusion. He wrote these words while under attack at every front, his own life truly in danger day to day. He had said previously that he wanted to keep living to do the work God had called him to do, namely to share the gospel with people who had not heard or who had not believed.

But now he says, "Listen! If I am only thinking about myself,

- I would rather step out of this old tent of a body that is ragged and worn.
- I would rather move out of this broken world where I am tormented by broken people and take the next step to a new life.
- Since I was saved, I have long for and I have strived to fulfill God's purpose for me, and so I would be glad to move closer to that time that my life shall praise Him fully and completely.

- And I love the fellowship I have with Christ in prayer. I love the communion I enjoy with the Father when I read His Word. I delight in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and I am overjoyed when He controls and empowers me; but to be fully in His presence, for body, soul, and spirit to dwell 24/7 with the Lord, day after day after ceaseless days, forever, and forever, and forever – that will be the best!

CONCLUSION: Oh that will be best! Will it not?

And that is what awaits all of us who have trusted Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

Dads, moms, don't you want your children to know these things and to build their lives upon the truths that come from God? Then be in church yourself, and be in a small group that studies the Bible and learns what God says. And get your children in our Kid Zone, and not just one or two times a month. How are they going to learn like that? Could they learn math if they were absent from class half the time or more? They cannot learn God's answers given in His book that way either. You have to bring them, and all of you come regularly to learn about the Lord.

And for those of you without family members for whom you have this responsibility, what about your friends. Don't they need the answers only God's Word can provide. Share with them. Invite them. Encourage them. God's plan includes them as well, and you can be the one to help them discover that marvelous truth.

And for you here today but who have not yet trusted Christ as your own Lord and Master, you can today. The Bible says,

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.