

“He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those



Opportunity with Accountability

Psalm 49 tells us about those men who have riches and honor, but who are without an understanding of the gospel of Christ. These will die and return to dust as the beasts that perish. The same Psalm hints that some will be redeemed from the power of the grave, and we have discussed the fact that identification with the sacrifice of Christ, and a resurrection through him, are essential to any hope beyond death.

The Psalmist continues his discourse in Psalm 50. He informs us that along with the great privilege and opportunity that is offered to us when we enter into Christ through baptism, there is also accountability. There is a judgment for the people of God and even death can not release us from that responsibility.

We may choose to speculate on who will be resurrected for judgment, but such discussions are not profitable. The one thing we can be certain of is that God’s people will be held accountable to appear before the “Judgment Seat of Christ” even if they must be resurrected to be there.

The Psalmist speaks of God’s people as “those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” (See Psalm 50:4-5 as quoted above) Isaiah identifies this same group as “Thy dead men.” Paul speaks of this group by saying “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10)

Responsibility to our Covenant

It is a great blessing to be numbered with God’s people and to have this wonderful opportunity for the forgiveness of sin and eternal life through Christ, as promised to Abraham. (See Acts 3:25-26) With this great blessing comes a very definite responsibility to judgment. *“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:28-31)*

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Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

“Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.”

(Psalm 49:20)

When the Psalmist uttered the words above, he revealed a great truth about life and death. It matters not how rich and famous we may become, or how many toys we collect, our lives are soon over and we return to the dust of the ground.

Our castles may reach into the skies and our accomplishments in this life may have been an attempt to immortalize our own name, but at the end of our appointed days, we will perish forever, without hope, even as a dog or any beast of the field.



Men die as the Beast

The teaching of the Psalmist is consistent with the entire message of the Bible. When Adam was sentenced to return to the dust of the ground all of his descendents were made subject to the same destiny. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* (Romans 5:12)

Solomon adds to the testimony by saying *“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”* (Eccles. 3:19-20)

Hope for some

This would be very depressing if that was all that we could look forward to, but in the very same Psalm the writer also said *“But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.”* (Psalm 49:15)

The Bible teaches us that some men are laid into the grave like sheep to perish, consuming into dust, (Psalm 49:14) but others will be redeemed from the power of the grave. What is it that makes the difference? Why do some (a few) have hope for life beyond the grave and many do not? Perhaps a better question is how do we want to end our life? Do we want to lie down in eternal death, or do we want to rest in hope for a resurrection in the last day?

“But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10 NRSV)

The Solution is in Christ Jesus

Men who have honor without understanding will perish forever like the beasts of the field. (Psalm 49:20) It is implied in this Psalm that a man who has understanding will not perish like the beasts. Understanding alone will not take care of the entire problem. We are also told in Proverbs 21:16 that a man that wanders from the way of understanding will remain in the congregation of the dead.

The scriptures teach us that an understanding of God's plan of salvation is therefore only an essential part of the process. The understanding must also lead to an obedient acceptance of the only *“name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) God has offered salvation through his son Jesus, who gave his life in sacrifice so that we might have hope for life beyond the grave. The gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth...” (Romans 1:16) Jesus told his disciples to teach this one true gospel and that those who believed and were baptized would be saved. (Mark 16:15-16)

Jesus is the Resurrection

Some men are *“without Christ...having no hope and without God in the world.”* (Eph. 2:12) These men may be rich, famous and in honor, but when they die, they consume in the grave like the beasts. Other men have hope for a resurrection in Christ Jesus, who taught *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:”* (John 11:25) Jesus is the resurrection; the disciples were sent to preach the gospel of Christ and the resurrection through him. (See Acts 4:2, Acts 17:18)

It is a fundamental Bible truth that Jesus rose from the grave; his resurrection has provided hope that those who are baptized into his name, will likewise be resurrected. The truth of the resurrection is strongly defended by the Apostle Paul. *“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

(1 Cor.15:17-22)

Paul makes it very clear that if Christ was not raised there would be no hope beyond the grave, even for those who have *“fallen asleep in Christ.”* Without this hope of a resurrection in Christ, these believers would also be like the beasts that perish.

The distinction is clear. There are two classes of people on this earth. The first consists of those who are born and who live in Adam. They may become great in their lives, but when they die, they perish forever as any beast. The other class are those who have responded with understanding. They have learned about the resurrection in Christ. They have believed his gospel of salvation and have been baptized into his name. These will be redeemed from the power of the grave when Jesus returns to *“judge the quick and the*

“They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.” (Isaiah 26:14)

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” (Isaiah 26:19)

The Contrast in Isaiah

The Prophet Isaiah provides us with additional confirmation of these truths about life, death, and resurrection. In his 26th chapter, as quoted above, there is a distinction made between men and their respective destinies. Some are said to be simply dead, they shall not rise, all of their memory will perish. These were men of honor, they were lords who had dominion. (see Isaiah 26:13-14) They were in honor, without the understanding that would lead them to a covenant with God and the hope of a resurrection. They are like the beasts that perish.

The other class in Isaiah's writings are termed *“Thy dead men.”* (Isa. 26:19) God's people will arise when the earth casts out the dead. Those who call upon the name of the Lord and seek him while he may be found, will be led to reject their heritage as sons of Adam and will be adopted into the family of God. They will then be eligible for the hope that was ratified through the sacrifice of Jesus, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Their covenant by a sacrifice, symbolic of his, will bring them forth from the dust of the ground when *“the earth shall cast out the dead.”*

Baptism, our Covenant by Sacrifice

If we respond with belief to the gospel of Christ and are willing to repent from dead works, our baptism into Christ is the symbolic act of sacrifice that identifies us with the sacrifice of Christ. Before baptism we are perishing creatures without hope.

“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:12-13)

Our choices are simple. If we are still the sons of Adam, without Christ, our life is one of vanity and vexation of spirit that will end all too soon in a return to the dust like the beasts that perish. On the other hand there is hope for life after death in Christ. The hope for a resurrection and eternal life is a special blessing. It is an opportunity that many are never given. Unfortunately when others are presented with this hope, they fail to recognize and grasp the potential.

We must take full advantage of every opportunity to seek the Lord, to learn the gospel of salvation and become one of God's people. When Jesus returns to this earth, he will gather together all of his people, those who are living and those who “sleep in Jesus.” (See 1 Thess. 4:13-17)