

What comes after death? Sunday 5 November 2023

The first question before we can look at what is if there is anything at all.

Is there a greater meaning to life than just our daily existence? Some people talk about living on in their descendants or in the records of history. But how many people from the 11th Century do we remember today? A few like Harold or William maybe – and who really knows who their ancestors were from that period – or from the 1st Century or from 10,000 BC

Is it our fate to come from nothing – be conscious for 70 or 80 or 90 years and then return to a state of nothingness? Or is there something more?

Through out History humans have been seeking for a greater meaning to existence – to understand the true reality in which we live. So first we must decide if there is something or nothing – the same question that has been asked since humanity first gained the ability for abstract thought.

We can never prove the existence nothing – absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Scientifically speaking the veil of death is not one we can cross except in a decidedly one-way fashion. Supernaturally that might be different – indeed I believe it is different but not from a

scientific perspective. We could prove that a room is empty but, in this case, we can't even prove that a room exists.

As a Christian I believe that there is something that exists after Death – because I believe from scripture that God created us to have relationship with him(sic) – for us to come to know God and enjoy him forever.

In the Bible the phrase Eternal Life appears 45 times – Eternal Punishment once and Punishment of Eternal fire or Destruction once each – so that is a 15:1 emphasis on the life part. The most famous verse on this topic is probably John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have **eternal life**.”

Obviously, the Eternal life part of the equation seems far more preferable so what does scripture say about how we gain it?

Firstly, do we deserve it? As a people?

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those who by their injustice suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is

plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.
²⁰ Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been seen and understood through the things God has made. So they are without excuse, ²¹ for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. Romans 1: 18 – 23.

And individually?

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; Romans
3:23

For the **wages of sin** is death, Romans 6:23

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8

So we do not and indeed we can not deserve it.

Secondly, If we cannot deserve it I think there is good news in that we cannot earn eternal life either.

For **by** grace you have been saved through faith, and this is **not** your own doing; it is the gift of God— **not** the result of **works**, so that no one may boast. [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)

If we cannot deserve it and cannot earn it then we have to rely on God for it. Not relying on our own imperfect nature but on Gods perfect nature and plan. Lets look at how some of those earlier passages continue?

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 6:23

since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Romans 3:23 – 24.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1: 8-9

Salvation – Eternal life is found in Jesus Christ.

We read

“There is salvation **in no** one else, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” [Acts 4:12](#)

And one of the passages that we often use at Funerals

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe^[a] in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.”^[c]
⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14: 1 - 6

Likewise, the full passage from John 3 reads

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do

evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.” John 3: 14 – 21.

Our Eternal destination is based not on our deeds good or ill but on our relationship with God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

No deed we can do is good enough to pay for our sins – and no sin is grave enough to take us out of the range of Gods mercy. That may seem unfair but if we received only fairness then we would all be doomed. Instead we receive Mercy and the gift of faith through the grace of God.