What’s After Death?

By Lloyd Anderson

In our current studies together we've been looking at some of the questions and answers and we've tried to bring answers to many questions. We've sought, as you remember, the answer to the question-- how can we really know the Lord? What makes Jesus Christ so different? Do I really need the Holy Spirit as a comforter in my life? Here I am, but how and why? And you know, the devil has plans for all of us. Am I really that bad? Are angels for real? What about the coming of Christ?

All of these things we've sought to answer in our studies together. And today, we come to still another study-- and that's the answer to the question "what follows after death?" And this of course is a very interesting study and one with which believers and, I might say, unbelievers, ought to be very, very cognizant and vitally interested-- because if Jesus Christ tarries his coming, you and I are going to go into the valley of the shadow of death, and it's a good idea to make some kind of preparation for that awesome moment when it does take place in your life and mine.

And so, the question today-- what follows death? But before we come to a word a prayer in our study today, let me take just a moment to share with you the fact that on March 29 through April 19, Dr. Sutherland, who is the President Emeritus of the Bible College Biola, is going to be going to the Holy Land and the Middle East. He will be going to Switzerland, Italy, Greece,
Egypt, Cyprus, Israel, Turkey and England. And if you can get away to be with Dr. Sutherland on March 29 through April 19 of this coming spring, they'd love to have you with them on this Holy Land tour. If you're interested in going with Dr. Sutherland March 29 through April 19, why not get in touch with Biola and simply address your letter to Dr. Sutherland and put 'tour' on the envelope and address it to Biola and you will certainly get a return in the mail. Now, many of you have been asking about touring and some of you perhaps may not be able to go on this tour-- although I hope you can with Dr. Sutherland because he will make a remarkable host and you'll have a delightfully wonderful time in the Middle East and in Europe.--

But if it isn't possible for you to go, will you think a little bit perhaps about the month of August, during which time yours truly hopes to go to the Holy Land with a group. And if you can possibly go with us, if you can't go with Dr. Sutherland and some of the others, why get in touch with us if you will-- and simply address a letter to me in care of Biola. Put 'personal' on the envelope. We'll see it and we'll get in touch with you. But remember, Dr. Sutherland during the month of March 29 through April 19 in the holy land and in Europe.

And I hope you can go with Dr. Sutherland if you can get away in the spring of the year.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank thee and praise thee for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee that he loved us and he gave himself for us. We pray thy blessing upon thy word to every heart, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.
Now the fear of death seems to be a common experience of people in every possible age group. Even Christian people sometimes do not always contemplate death completely without fear. Our temperaments differ, our emotions are different, and the sign of some apprehension upon death is somewhat normal in the lives of men and women. We must remember that real courage is not so much a matter of being fearless, but in being able to triumph over our fear. Now, this is a tremendous thing. The celebrated Cesar Borgia, you remember many, many years ago in the land of Italy, is said to have remarked on his death bed, "I have provided in the course of my life for everything except death. And now, alas, I am about to die-- although I am entirely unprepared to go." Now what Cesar Borgia had to say I am sure would be true of many, many people living today. I have lived my life, I am living my life, but I am totally unprepared to die. I don't know where I would go. I don't know what would happen to me, and certainly, we must remember this-- There is a legend, by way of illustration, about a certain nobleman many years ago, who kept a court fool to whom one day he gave his beautiful staff with a charge to keep it until he should meet someone who was a greater fool than himself. Not many years following, the nobleman fell sick and he was about to die. "I must shortly leave you", said the nobleman to the court jester, or the fool. "And whither are you going?, asked the fool. "Well, I'm going into another world" said the Lord. "When will you come again?" asked the fool. "Never." "Never?" said the fool. "And what provision have you made for your entertainment after death. And where are you going." "I haven't made any provision at all" said the Lord. "No?" said the fool. "None at all? Well, I want you to take this staff. With all of my foolishness, I have met a man who is more of a fool than I am."
And my friend, this is true. You see, young people who are so full of life and ambition, that it is hard even for them to think about the subject of death unless they have just recently lost a close friend or been in the war, or a member of their family. Most young people push the thought just as far into the background of their minds as possible. And even older people do this -- I have found as a minister. But nobody can completely ignore the problem of death.

You see, death is no respecter of age. Surely there are times when every teenager thinks about life hereafter and whether or not he is ready to meet the Lord. And surely every adult, no matter his age, does the same thing. And I think we ought to come to the Bible and see what it has to say about both the believer and the unbeliever in the problem of what follows after death. In First Corinthians chapter 15, if you have your Bibles-- First Corinthians chapter 15 beginning with verse 51-- is a passage to which we would like to direct your attention, where Paul is talking about the believer in Christ.

He says, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all physically die, but we shall all be changed as believers in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Now, this is a tremendous passage. And he goes on down to the end of the chapter to talk to you about what follows death in the life of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this of course is a tremendous thing.
You've heard the expression, given foolishly by some people, "drop dead". Have you ever heard that expression? Most likely it was said in a jesting manner and in a joking way. But to really drop dead is a very serious matter. And I think humanity has designated two things as being quite sure. One of them is death and the other one is taxes. God has also placed death on the list of things that are very, very sure. It was one of the punishments that was passed upon Adam and Eve when they fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, and it's passed on to the human race ever since. None of us can ever escape death unless the Lord should come before some of us living today die.

And I think we need to understand what is in store for mankind after death. And so what has God planned for the Christian after he dies? Well, I think we need to remember, first of all, that of the several resurrections and judgments that are mentioned in the Bible, only two are going to be discussed by us, if we have time. They are separated from each other by about a thousand years-- a little more or a little less. The resurrection of the believer is going to take place before the awesome tribulation period breaks out upon the earth and the resurrection of the unbeliever will take place at the close of the 1000 year future prophetic rule of Jesus Christ over the earth.

Without doubt, the most thorough chapter in the Bible on the subject of the resurrection of the Christian is First Corinthians Chapter 15. And here we see proof of the resurrection in verses 1-19 because Jesus Christ was first raised from the dead and we will be raised in Him. Then in verses 20-34 of First Corinthians chapter 15, we see what precedes the resurrection of the believer in a coming day. And then in verses 35 to 50, you have the process of the resurrection of
the believer itself. And then in verses 51 to the end of the chapter, you have the glorious prospects of the resurrection of the believer.

Now man seeks to know what is in outer space. He has built spaceships and equipment to explore the vast unknown. But my friend, when Jesus Christ comes for his own in the air, as we studied in our last two lessons, there will be no need for such conveyances at all. In verse 52 of First Corinthians Chapter 15, we read that we shall be changed as Christians in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. No longer will our bodies be subject to human corruption and decay and real change, according to verses 52 and 53 of First Corinthians chapter 15. Then in verse 54, the Christian is said at that day in his resurrection to be free from sin and death. And then you remember in verse 57 of First Corinthians 15, and the question is asked --who is responsible for this tremendous victory in the resurrection of the believer? And the answer, of course, very quickly comes, that Jesus Christ is responsible for that victory.

Now, because of the blessed hope of the resurrection of the believer, you and I, in verse 58 of First Corinthians 15, are admonished to be steadfast, to be unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. We should then not be apostles of gloom, but we ought to be Christian men and women producing good works, according to Ephesians 2:10. How important it is for us to remember that Christians have eternal life the moment they believe in Christ. And what we do for the Lord on this earth after we have been saved is going to have lasting reward when we are resurrected and when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
Now what about the believers rewards? Well after the believers resurrection, he is going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Now the unbeliever will not be there at all. This is only for the Christian. This is a judgment after resurrection, which has only to do with the believer in Christ. And in 2 Corinthians 5:10 we read—Shall we not all appear as believers before the judgment seat of Christ?—Now notice the words "we" and "all" and "every one" may receive the reward for the deeds done in the body. You see, no believer is going to be excused from the judgment of the believer which follows the resurrection in that glorious day of Christ coming.

The words "judgement seat" could be translated bema seat, or reward bench. In ancient days, a raised platform was used by the officials or the judges of an athletic contest, and it was here at the bema that the rewards were passed out. And such a system is still in use today for many of our sporting events. When we were in the city of Corinth this last summer, outside of Athens, you remember, where Paul preached in the city of Corinth— to which he wrote First and Second Corinthians— we saw the bema. We saw the judgment seat in the ruins of that ancient city of Corinth.

And it was there that judgement was passed out. Then we need to remember that the unbeliever also dies as well as the Christian. Now what happens to the unbeliever after death. Well, in the Book of Revelation, and if you have your Bible, and I'm turning to it right now— you can hear me rustling the pages of my Bible— in Revelation Chapter 20, toward the end of the book. You'll have an interesting series of verses in 11 to 15. --And I saw a great white throne, he said, and him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the unbelieving dead small and great stand before God. And the books
were opened and another book was open, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. And this is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.-- Now this is a very awesome thing. Some years ago, we were told, that a woman who in her past life had experienced grim tragedy, made the following provisions in her will. Her name was not to appear on any memorial tablet. No music or singing was to be heard at her funeral. No flowers were to be placed on her grave and her tombstone was not to cost more than fifteen dollars and it was to bear only the inscription "M.A.P.", with the date of her death, her age, and this Scripture-- "God be merciful to me, a sinner." You see, her sole wish was that her name would be utterly forgotten. But God doesn't forget anybody. Just as every child of God will be resurrected and rewarded, my friend, so every unbelieving individual, whether living or dead, is going to be resurrected and judged by the Lord. Now some of the most awesome words in the Bible are recorded in Revelation Chapter 20 that we read to you a moment ago. How that before the great white throne judgment, the unbeliever is going to arise either from the grave or wherever he's been laid to rest, or if he's living at that moment to be brought up before the great white throne judgment. And here will be the judgment of the unbelieving. No believer will be there, but the unbeliever will be there, and he will be judged as to what he has done with Jesus Christ, and of course, he would not even be there if he wasn't an unbeliever. And he's cast into hell forever and forever. This is a very awesome thing. I didn't write that. I didn't say that. The Word of God--this Bible, which is inspired of God-- has written concerning the condition of the unbeliever after death. And it'll be a tragic hour. To lose your health is much, to
lose your money is more, to lose your soul is such a loss that nothing can ever restore. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. And my friend today, if you're an unbeliever, I plead with you to find Jesus Christ before it's everlastingly too late.