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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Hebrews 12:12-13

SHALL A MAN LIVE AGAIN?

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Job 14:4-5

Birth is the most common experience which men share. No man can affect (i.e.; prevent or hasten) that event by his own will. Death is next in line as a common experience. *"It is appointed unto men once to die."* (Heb 9:27) This occurs according to the appointment of a Sovereign GOD who says: *"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."* (Deut 32:39) No man either lives or dies apart from GOD's ordained purpose.

Only two men are mentioned in the scriptures as having escaped death. One being Enoch (see Gen.5:24; Heb.11:5) and the other being Elijah who was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot. (see 2 Kings 2:11) Others that are said to escape death are those believers, spoken of by Paul, who are alive at the return of the LORD in the last day. *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* (1Thes 4:17)

While that is the hope and desire of every believer, the reality is that the majority will have experienced death and the grave before that most glorious event of the LORD's coming in the clouds takes place. Yet death is not a terror to those whose HOPE is in CHRIST. CHRIST has borne the sting of death and risen victorious over the grave as the *"FIRST FRUITS of them that slept."* (1 Cor.15:20) Sleep is the most common description of death, for the sons of GOD, that we find in the scriptures. When Lazarus had died, the LORD JESUS told HIS disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."* (John 11:11) When they did not understand this, HE told them plainly, *"Lazarus is dead."* (John 11:14)

Most all cultures and religions have some form of thought regarding a man's supposed existence after his death. This idea primarily arises out of the same fleshly understanding that Adam had when he did not comprehend the import of that decree and prohibition which the LORD gave him. *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Gen 2:17) Men, in general, believe that they cannot ultimately "die" or cease to exist.

Thus, arose the pagan notion of re-incarnation shared by many of the Eastern religions. The Egyptians desired to be buried with various trinkets, food and things that they might use later. The Vikings had Valhalla that they might enter as they sailed away upon a burning ship. It is quite common, even among Christians, to find misunderstandings of the implications and applications of death as revealed in the scriptures.

A very common consideration which is held, by perhaps even a majority, is that the "soul" of a man is immortal. Nearly every funeral that you go to, regardless of a man's profession of faith or lack thereof, finds the deceased being ushered into a place called "Heaven." When someone dies, we often hear the "platitude," "Well he's better off now" as if to assume that the dead are all escorted into a blissful place. This notion is reinforced by the ever-increasing multitude of those who have "death" or "near death" experiences and somehow come back to tell their story and often write books about it. The Apostle Paul, though carried up to the "third heaven" said that it was "unlawful" for him to recount what he had heard. (see 2 Cor 12:4)

Many claim to believe in a place which they call "hell" which they picture as a fiery pit where the wicked will roast forever like a French fry in hot grease. One will seldom if ever find anyone assigned to such a destination by his funeral preacher. We make no claims of having any particular insights into what occurs at death or thereafter. All that we can do is lean upon those things which are stated in the scriptures as to any destination which a man might arrive at after he has passed from this present evil world.

We do not find any scriptural support for the idea of man having any part of himself as being immortal. The scriptures do clearly say that CHRIST "Only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (1Tim 6:16) If a man is to live forever he must be given ETERNAL LIFE by the only ONE who possesses it. Hell cannot be eternal because both it and death are cast into the "lake of fire" in the final day. (see Rev.20:10-15)

There are many theories about death, heaven, and hell which we would not attempt to prove or refute since we know nothing as we ought to know. But if we are to rely upon the scriptures alone to formulate our notions of these things we must reject or at least question much of what is considered "orthodoxy" by many. The LORD did say "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mat 10:28) It would appear to me that the soul is not "immortal" since it can be destroyed by HIM who created man as a "living soul". It would also appear to me that "hell" is a place of destruction. We shall soon enough discover the TRUTH of these things, face to face with our LORD. We will then be done with our "theories" which shall be swept away by HIS GLORY.

So, we come to a question raised by Job: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14) Most folks assume that the answer is yes. It is indeed true that Job, in the remainder of this verse expresses his HOPE that this will be the case as he said; "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." He later exclaimed: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:25-27)

Yet as we read the preceding verses, (before Job posited his question in verse 14), we see that he is actually pointing out the impossibility that men should naturally "live again". He does so by setting forth a truth that is often overlooked by those who clamor to assure us that all shall indeed have such a life. He asks this question and then answers it: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (Job 14:4) The LORD taught this, saying, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Mat 7:18-19)

Job points out that there is hope that a tree might sprout again from its own root after it is cut down (see 14:7-9). For the principle of life is within its root. In contrast he says it is not so with man. "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" (Job 14:10) He is saying that it is impossible for man by any power or energy of his own (i.e.; innately) to live again. There is no part of a man which can either produce or maintain life. He is not immortal, death is his appointed end.

That is indeed a bleak outlook which the natural man rebels against just as he rebels against the purpose of GOD to determine the length of his days and the time and manner of his death. Our father Adam has led the way in this rebellion and all men have followed in his likeness. Some even think that they can thwart the purpose of GOD by committing suicide, yet even in this manner they fulfill the eternal will and purpose of our Sovereign GOD. Judas is a prime example of this. His days, just like every other creature, was/is determined by HIM who does all things well and according to HIS own glorious design.

Can a man live again? The good news recorded in the Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed GOD tells us that those who believe on JESUS CHRIST, the REDEEMER of sinners, shall indeed do so. "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) This "everlasting LIFE" is not naturally acquired but is the gift of GOD. Those who believe and thus receive HIM, "Were (i.e.; past tense, not will be or may be) born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:8-10)

Men cannot live again apart from a supernatural work of GOD in them by the HOLY SPIRIT. This is that which the LORD spoke to Nicodemus of, saying; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) Wherever the true Gospel is preached this is the message that is proclaimed: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1John 5:11-12)

Apart from being found "in CHRIST", men will surely perish. HE is the SAVIOR of sinners and is presently calling sinners unto HIMSELF. "Hark the gospel trumpet sounding, sinners hear the call and come. CHRIST in pardoning love abounding now is calling sinners home. Though your crimes have reached to heaven and of deepest dye appear. Ask and they shall be forgiven, seek and ye shall find HIM near." mam