

# FIVE MINUTES AFTER DEATH

Five minutes after you die where will you be, in heaven, hell, purgatory, asleep, or dust? What really happens when a man dies? Every living person has at one time or another asked these questions. A tremendous sum of money has been spent on insurance in preparation for death. There is nothing that man hates and fears so much as death. In our times there are sixty thousand deaths every twenty-four hours. Just think of the mighty army that are passing away every day that goes by. People of all religions and races die. Rich men and poor men die alike. Death is like a cruel monster who steals into the home and carries away our beloved, leaving a void and loneliness that can only be eased by the loving and sympathetic compassion of Jesus Christ.

Every one wants to live. We love life, but there is a time when the grim reaper knocks on every door. We would give everything we have if we might drive him away. There is nothing we love so much as life. And there is nothing we dread so much as death. In all parts of the world whether in heathen countries or in Christian countries, we find the same cry of sorrow, "Where are the dead?" It is because men are not acquainted with the true condition of man in death that there is so much fear of it.

If it is true that when men die they are immediately ushered into a glorious paradise, then it seems to me that everyone would be desirous of dying so that they could get to this wonderful place.

The editors of Time magazine had a question put to them a few years ago, and the circumstances connected with that question are very interesting. Under the subject of medicine the magazine had reported on the work of some Russian scientists who had successfully restored life to patients that had been declared clinically dead. By administering some new and powerful heart stimulants a few minutes after death they had revived their patients. It was in reply to this report that a reader asked the editors of Time magazine this question: "During the interval when the patient was dead, did his soul or spirit go to heaven only to be required to quickly return, or was the spirit half way to hell when summoned to the body again? Can these questions be answered?" This was the query of the reader, and in all truth the editor replied, "Not by Time magazine."

And the reason is that only the Bible can give an answer to what lies beyond death. The testimony of the scriptures is absolutely clear. The Bible tells us that "The dead know not any thing." Eccl. 9:5.

I want to take you back to the book of Genesis where the first great lie was told by the devil. God had told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden tree they would die. But the devil came to them and said, "Why don't you eat the fruit?" And Eve said, "We can't. If we do we'll die." Then the devil came back with that original lie that has been passed right down to our time. I read in Gen. 3:4, "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye

shall not surely die." God said that if man sinned he would die. The devil said he would not. Which one are you going to believe tonight, my friend?

We are told in II Thess. 2:8-11 that Satan in the last days will propagate his lies and many will believe them. Let me read this, "And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Will you believe a lie, my friend, or will you believe God's word? The only safe course for us is to believe the word of God.

The Bible makes it clear that only God has immortality. "Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting." I Tim. 6:15, 16. Perhaps many Christians have overlooked this verse, because quite often we hear Christians saying that all Christians have immortality. But the Bible says that only God hath immortality. Let me say that those who give us false comfort by saying that man is immortal and that he does not die, are just propagating the lies of the devil. You can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will never find a text that says that man has immortality. But it does say that God only hath immortality and it also says "death hath passed upon all men, for all have sinned."

Let us call some witnesses to the stand tonight, men whom God considered to be great and loyal servants of His. The first one is Job. What does Job say about the subject of death. Job 14:14, "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Job is asking a question that many people ask, especially when they go to a funeral, they say will my loved one live again? If a man dies, will he live again? Job says, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

Job looked forward to the day when his change would come, when his mortal body would be changed to immortal. In Job 14:12, it says, "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Job makes it very plain that when a man dies he lieth down and he riseth not till the heavens be no more. They shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep. They wait in the grave all the days of their appointed time until the change comes. Now when does this change come according to Job? Job 19:25-27, "For 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." When did Job expect to have his change come? He speaks of the latter day when the Lord shall come. Job had just buried ten children and he was looking forward to a resurrection day when they shall be raised, and it will be when the Redeemer comes in the latter day.

Isn't it wonderful, Christian friend, that our Redeemer shall stand at the latter day, and shall raise those who have fallen to sleep in Him? There will be a real resurrection. This is not some mysterious or vague promise, but it is a real promise that in the flesh we shall see Jesus when He comes.

Now let us go on to David. In Ps. 17:15, David says, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Notice that David looked forward to a glorious day when the Lord would come and awaken him. He did not believe that he was going to be translated when he died, and that some part of him would fly away to a glory world. He says, "I'll be sleeping, but I will be satisfied when I awake in His likeness."

There are many people today who believe that when death comes they will sort of flit away into a more glorious life. They believe that they have been grinding away in low gear, and suddenly they are going to shift into high, and be gone. Among the heathen there is a belief in a spirit world, and unfortunately this same belief has come into the Christian church. The heathen make all kinds of provisions for the future life. They bury the precious things with the deceased thinking that they will want them in the other world. They do everything they can to frighten away the evil spirits. They have even gone so far as to kill the favorite animals, and yes, even the wives of the one who has died, so that they will not be lonely in the spirit world. They want him to have everything he desires. They don't want him to lack for anything when he reaches that other world. But friends, this is a false doctrine. It has no basis at all upon what the Bible teaches. And we must take the Bible and the Bible alone.

David says, "I will be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Not when I die, but when I awake. What else does David say? I will read Ps. 115:17, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Many people do not realize that this verse is in the Bible. Actually if there was anyone who should believe in praising the Lord it ought to be David. He wrote the Psalms. He was the sweet singer. But David says that the dead do not praise the Lord, and he does not make any exceptions. More than that, he says in Ps. 146:4, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." David makes his point clear. He is speaking of a man that dies, and he makes it plain that his breath goeth forth, his body goes back to the dust, and in that very day his thoughts perish.

Now what happens to a man five minutes after he dies? Well the Bible says, "His thoughts perish." A good man does not go off to heaven, or a

bad man to hell, but they are both laid in the grave where they remain until the latter day when our Redeemer comes to raise the dead. While they are resting in the grave they are merely sleeping. David did not expect to go flitting off somewhere as soon as he died. Neither did the disciples of Jesus.

I wish to read from the book of Acts, the second chapter and 29th and 34th verses. These words are from the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." Notice that Peter says that David was both dead and buried. Now let me read this again, "Let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." Now someone says, "yes, yes, that is right. I know his grave is still here but I think there is something, either the soul or the spirit, I just don't know which, but something that flits off to heaven." Let me read verse 34 of this sermon by Peter. "For David is not ascended into the heavens." So you see my friends, it is made very clear that David is resting in the grave until the resurrection day. Now God said that David was a man after his own heart, and if there was anyone that God would have liked to have taken into heaven at his death, it would have been David. But David made it clear that he would remain in the grave until the Lord comes. And he said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in his likeness."

Now let us go to another man. One who was a great servant of God. And one who also suffered much for his faith in the Lord. And that is Daniel. In Daniel 12:2 it says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel makes it plain that the dead are sleeping in the dust until the resurrection—both the righteous and the wicked. Now notice what the angel said to Daniel in the 13th verse, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Now according to the popular theory today, when Daniel died he immediately found himself in heaven. But the angel of the Lord said to him, "You will rest, but in the last day you will stand in your lot at the coming of Jesus."

Now the smartest man who ever lived in the history of this world, we are told, was Solomon. And what does he say about the dead? I shall read Eccl. 9:10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Please notice how specific this is. No language could be clearer. Where are the dead? What is their condition in death? Well Solomon says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." And then he makes a very positive and strong statement in Eccl. 9:6, "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished: neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Now that is direct and strong, isn't it?

But yet Solomon even makes it stronger. In the 5th verse of Eccl. 9 he says, "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything." Now could any language be clearer than this? The living know that they shall die. They live in expectancy of death. But the dead know not anything. It fits perfectly into the picture that we have already found as given by the other great servants of God.

Now suppose we could cross-question Solomon—put him on the witness stand. We might say "Isn't there something that is intelligent that goes off to the glory world? He answers, "There is nothing." "But where are you going when you die, Solomon?" "To the grave." "Well don't you expect to know more after death than you know now, Solomon?" Answer, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing."

Now, we read from the writings of Paul. There is a verse in First Thessalonians that shows clearly and states plainly that the dead do not go on ahead of the living to their reward. I Thess. 4:13-16: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which hath no hope." Paul says I have attended many funerals where the wicked sorrow as those who have no hope. It is a terrible thing. Unbelievers and heathen certainly sorrow as those who have no hope. In fact one noted infidel, before death, said that death is but a leap into the dark. This is a miserable concept of death. But Paul says, "Don't sorrow as those who have no hope . . . For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (or precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Paul tells us that the dead in Christ shall rise when Jesus comes, and we which are alive and remain on this earth will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. They are not going to precede the living. We are all going home together.

Right with this text of Paul's, I want to read another one of his statements. I Cor. 15: 13, 14 and 18; "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen. And if Christ be not risen . . . your faith is vain . . . Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." According to this writing, Paul tells us that the grave is not the doorway to Paradise or Heaven, but that those who have gone into their graves, except they have hope in Christ Jesus, and believe in a resurrection from the dead, they are perished. If there is no resurrection there is no reward. But thank God there will be a resurrection.

Paul says in the 51st verse, "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." We are all going to be changed at the resurrection time. And this is when Jesus comes. Paul tells us that we are going to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. Remember that Job said that he would wait all the days of his appointed time in the grave, sleeping until his change would come.

Paul tells us that this change takes place at the last trump, or when Jesus comes and raises the dead. And that is what Job was looking forward to. Also, David, Daniel, and all of the other followers of Christ.

Now for a few moments let us consider the theories of men. Do men actually believe that the dead are conscious? Over and over again at funerals we hear the preacher say that the people are already in heaven. But do men really believe it? I don't think they do. It is so inconsistent if we just stop to analyze it. Let me illustrate. When I was a lad I had a wagon. One day as I was rolling down a steep hill I ran into the front wheel of a truck that was parked out in the middle of the street. My head hit something solid on the side of that truck and I was completely unconscious for some time. Finally I regained my consciousness again. All the while that I was unconscious, my thinking powers were dead. But after I had been worked over for some time I came back to normal in my thinking. Since I had only bumped my head slightly against the truck, I was only unconscious for a short time. But, according to the popular theory, if the truck had run over me then I would have known everything immediately and would have been ushered into a better world.

Again I might illustrate this popular theory as follows: A man is crossing a busy intersection and a Ford car comes along and hits him and knocks him down and he is unconscious. But in a moment a Cadillac comes along and runs over him and he is now no longer unconscious, but he knows everything.

Go to the operating room. There the doctor stands performing a major operation. The patient lies unconscious, but if the doctor should slip a little and cut an artery, that patient would immediately be plunged into bliss and would become all conscious. Does it make sense?

If this theory is true, then the dead are more conscious than those who have been knocked unconscious. They are more conscious and enjoying a more perfect life than those who are still living. If death is a gateway to heaven, then why do people weep and sorrow at the funerals? O, how many times I have noticed how people sorrow and weep when a loved one is taken from them. But if they believed what they say they do, they ought to be the happiest people in the world.

Sometime ago I read a newspaper clipping about an experience that happened in Kansas. A Sunday school teacher and a deacon in a church was held for the murder of his wife and little children. When he was questioned, he said, "Well I just thought it would be better for them to be rushed on to the glory world. I couldn't bear to think of them going through the trials of this life." In the strictest sense of the word he was right if the theory of the dead going immediately to glory is true. Actually it would be a wonderful thing to be ushered into glory. Death under any condition would be merciful and a loving act. If the doctrine is true that death is a quick jump into glory, then Stalin and Hitler in killing off so many people, did more good than all the sermons that have been preached in the world today.

But Jesus said that death is an enemy. If death is an enemy then it certainly wouldn't be the ushering into a better life. But someone says, this is so disappointing. I have always thought of my loved ones up in heaven watching over me in all that I do. Could your loved ones be happy looking upon your grief and sorrow? Could they be happy seeing your troubles and heartaches? Actually religion has become very liberal. The majority of people are not going to be saved. Jesus made it clear that the way to glory is a strait and narrow road and few there be that find it. Most people are in the broad way that leads to destruction. Frankly, I'd rather have all my loved ones resting peacefully in the grave tonight, then to know that even one was suffering torment in hell fire. And the Bible does tell us that they are resting in their graves. They are asleep.

If the dead go to heaven as soon as they die then what need would there be for Jesus to come again and raise the dead. Most Christians believe in the judgment. They believe that when Jesus comes he is going to judge the world. But if individuals go to heaven, or hell as soon as they die, then why would Jesus need to come and judge the world, if men are already judged at death.

When Jesus was on his way to Bethany he received word that Lazarus was sick. The disciples couldn't understand why he didn't hurry to get to him. Finally word was received that Lazarus was dead. When Jesus heard this he told his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples were worried. They said "Why Master, if Lazarus is asleep leave him alone. It is good for a sick man to sleep." But then Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead." First Jesus had said Lazarus sleepeth, but they thought he was speaking of taking of rest in sleep. Then Jesus said Lazarus is dead. Jesus immediately went to the home of Lazarus, and then to the tomb where Lazarus was laid. There he stood surrounded by mourning people. He commanded that the stone be rolled away. Then Jesus said, "Lazarus come down from heaven." Is that what he said? O no, friends. But that is what people would have him say today. What Jesus actually said was "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus obeyed. Even though he had been buried for four days he came forth from the tomb, still wearing the grave clothes. If he had been in heaven, would Jesus have called him down to this dark vale of tears to go through more sorrow and suffering in this world. If he had been in heaven, I would think that Lazarus would have been disappointed to have to come back to this troubled world. But Jesus did not call him down from heaven, or up from hell, but he called him forth from the tomb where he had been sleeping.

The Bible tells us about Jairus' daughter who was sick with a fever. And they sent for Jesus. But the girl died before Jesus could get there. Jesus went to her side. Did he say "now daughter I want you to say goodbye to the angels in heaven and come on back down here to be with your folks?" No, he didn't say that, but what Jesus said to her was "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."

There is going to be a literal resurrection from

the dreamless sleep of the dead some day. Jesus said in John 5:28, 29, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." Away back there Jesus was pointing forward to the day of resurrection. He said "they shall all hear my voice and come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Both the good and evil will be raised when Jesus comes.

Before the apostle Paul died he spoke of the reward that he expected to receive when the Lord Jesus would appear. Paul did not expect to receive that reward at death, but when Jesus comes. In II Tim. 4:7, 8 he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: (the day of his appearing) and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Notice that Paul expected to receive a crown of righteousness when the Lord Jesus would appear.

The apostle Peter expected to receive a crown of glory at the coming of Christ for he says "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." I Pet. 5:4. Peter tells us that the crown of glory will be received when the chief Shepherd appears. All of the disciples looked forward to the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of their fondest dreams. They knew and taught that the reward of the righteous would not be received until that time. When Jesus finally comes the rewards will be given to all his faithful saints.

But someone says, "I don't see how Jesus will remember every one." Well in Isa. 49:15 it says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." It matters not what our end may be, whether we go down into the depths of the sea or whether our bodies be burned in a holocaust of flames or whether we are blown out of existence by atomic bombs. God says I will never forget you. The Lord is going to gather his own even if their ashes have been scattered upon the seven seas. The Lord will restore his own. Ezekiel wondered how the dead could ever live again, particularly when he thought about the disintegration of the body and so the Lord gave him a vision recorded in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel—the vision of the dry bones. This is well worth reading for God tells how he will restore his people.

I want to read a beautiful verse in Jer. 31:6, "Thus saith the Lord; refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." To you mothers who have recently laid away your child, Jesus says to you "refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

When I conducted a series of meetings in a city back east, I was called on the phone one night to go to the hospital and pray for a little sick child. The baby had had a serious operation and was in a critical condition. The mother pleaded, O, I want you to pray for my baby. So I went. Together with the family, I prayed by the side of that little one. The next morning, the mother called again. She was almost hysterical. O, she said, I don't want my child to die. Again I went and had prayer for the child. Later on in the day I called the hospital and was informed that the little one had passed away. About a week later I stopped at this home, but no one was there. However, when I went around to the back, I found the kitchen door open and looking in I could see the high chair just as the baby had eaten its last meal. The baby's toys were on the floor just as he had left them when he was rushed to the hospital. The next day I called and invited this grieving mother and her husband to come to my meeting in which I was going to speak on the dead. They came, and though their hearts were bleeding and broken, they heard a message of hope. They learned that their little child was sleeping, resting until the resurrection morning. As a result of those people coming to the meeting, eventually five in that family gave their hearts to Jesus. But, you say, wasn't that an expensive price to pay for their salvation, that a little child had to be planted in the ground? Indeed it was. But if life eternal could come from that experience, then it was not altogether in vain.

If you have lost a loved one, you cannot give flowers as a tribute of love and expect them to last. But you can give your heart to Jesus and expect to meet that loved one in days to come.

I want to say tonight, my friends, that there is only one heart beat between you and eternity. Your life hangs by a slender thread, and when Jesus takes the scissors and clips that thread, you will have to go to your rest. When people get up to sixty or seventy years of age they say that they must be careful for they realize that they are living on borrowed time. They are not so free to squander a moment or to do anything that would injure themselves. I want to say that every one here in this auditorium tonight is living on borrowed time.

One time a sculptor carved out a beautiful work of art and he invited the people of the artistic world to come and view his work. The young

sculptor hid behind a screen so that he could hear the comments of those who came to see his work. Michael Angelo happened along, and when the sculptor saw him coming he was most interested to hear if the great master should make any remarks. As Michael Angelo looked on this work of art, he shook his head finally and said, "it lacks only one thing." And then he left. His words hurt the young sculptor so that he was deeply troubled over it. What was it that his work lacked. The great master sculptor had said that there was just one thing lacking. He was so grieved over the matter that finally his friends sought out Michael Angelo and said, you have hurt this young man. You said that his work of art still lacked one thing. What is it? Michael Angelo answered, O, I should have explained and finished what I started to say. It lacked one thing, the breath of life to make it alive.

There are many, many men carving out a perfect life as best they can. They are carving out a life of being a good husband, or a good neighbor, or a good father, or a good business man. As far as this life is concerned the carving is good, but no matter how good the work may be, there is one thing lacking. Unless a man lets Jesus come into that life that he has carved, he lacks the breath of life. He may be a good man, but only those who accept Jesus Christ, and let him breath in them the breath of life can be truly perfect. Only as we take Jesus do we have that life that is necessary to make this clay complete. Remember Jesus said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life. We do not really have life unless we have Jesus. Jesus came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly.

And some day he is coming with the keys of the grave to open up those graves of our loved ones. And we with them shall be taken home to dwell in the mansions fair. Some day soon the portals will be open, and we will behold our loved ones once again. Some day Jesus will make it all plain and then we will understand all about these things that we have experienced in this life. But best of all we will be reunited with those we have lost in this life, and then we will live beyond the vale of tears.