

Read also Genesis 2:15-18, 3:11-13, 17-19. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

One Bible passage says, ‘God counts the hairs of your head’ and ‘God knows every sparrow that falls.’ Do you believe that?

Is God so attentive?

This week’s topic was set over three months ago. It is, “What does the Bible say about heaven? Does your soul go straight to heaven or does it lay dormant until Christ comes back?”

Did God know way ahead of time that my father would go to heaven this week? And that I might need the encouragement of this message? He certainly did. When “coincidences” like this happen, we must open our spiritual eyes. God has plans. God holds your life in His strong, mighty hands. Jesus “holds the keys of death and the grave.” The theological truth you can rely on is that God is omniscient.

Do you wonder what happens when you die? What happened to your loved one?

The Corinthian church wondered about that. So Paul wrote them and he explained about the resurrection. It is core to Christian belief. In fact, whenever Paul gave his witness, he told people that there’s life after death. READ Acts 24:20-21.

Now hear what he said to the Corinthians. READ 1 Cor 15:12-26

The resurrection is a core belief of Christians. And, the Bible is full of details about heaven, resurrection, and the spiritual life because God is loquacious. *God talks*. God loves to prepare us for the future.

Are you prepared? Or do you ignore the end? Be assured, it comes unexpectedly. You better be prepared.

That’s why the Bible has so many prophets. God is not shy or secretive; he wants you to know. You might think it is hard to grasp the spiritual realm. So God speaks in many ways. The future is revealed as through a prism.

A prism is solid but it is transparent. Its Greek origin means “something sawed.” White light enters and is refracted so that you see its components.

So death is a one-time event which has many future components. How do we know that? The subject matter is really too great for us earthbound people. But God reveals various components about resurrection here and there to help us. Every so often God allows the heavenlies to become diaphanous, that is, very sheer and light; almost completely transparent or translucent.

God does not allow us to know everything. Can you live with the mystery of God? That’s called living by faith. Paul says, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully” (1 Cor 13:12).

Now what if God had children who thought they had all the answers? How do you think that would impact the people all around you? Do you like a “know-it-all?” I suggest you avoid people who have all the answers.

We see through a glass darkly; like a prism, a piece here and there—but we trust the one who reveals Himself to those who seek Him.

The world around us reveals a “general revelation” of resurrection. Observe the cycle of nature – Plants die and are resurrected each year. Deserts bloom even after a hundred years if it rains. Resurrection is built into this world even though the world is filled with death.

Do you have the spiritual eyes to see it? Do you pursue more understanding or just ignore what is going to come to you? The wise person prepares.

God also gives a “specific revelation” in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

Do you ever wonder why no one recognized Jesus when they saw him resurrected? Was he different? Did he not look the same? Did he have thicker hair or lighter skin or whiter clothes?

No. He had been beaten beyond recognition three days before. But here he was—Himself. Imagine seeing someone who died in a terrible car wreck. And then when you went to their visitation, instead of seeing them in a coffin, there they sat.

You would be stunned. You wouldn’t believe it was them.

Seeing Jesus appear when the door was locked was mind-blowing. This was one of those prisms. Jesus appeared bodily, and other than scars in his hands, feet, and side, his body was completely healed.

So are we resurrected immediately upon death? We don’t entirely know but here are some Scriptures you need to learn:

According to 2Cor 5 we are never without a body. Paul writes:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling -- if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (2 Cor 5:1-4).

Here’s a piece of the prism—you will not be floating around heaven as a little bleeping light bumping into other bleeping lights you know and trying to figure out who they are, as psychiatrist M. Scott Peck imagines.

But, if you look at old headstones the most common saying you will see is “Asleep in Jesus.” Are we asleep for a period of time after we die before being resurrected? Again, “we see through a mirror darkly.” So we look for clues.

Jesus said some things that indicate immediate resurrection:

To the thief on the cross: “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43).

Another time Jesus told a parable about a rich man and poor man who died. The rich man went to the Bad Place (Hades) and the poor man was carried away to be with Abraham. The rich man saw Lazarus being comforted at Abraham’s side, while the rich man was being tormented. He asked for Lazarus to come and comfort him but was told:

“Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us” Lk 16:25-26.

Abraham was living. He was not sleeping. This is a piece of the prism.

In another place, Jesus says to Martha when her brother died:

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” He asked her, “Do you believe this?” (Jn 11:25-26)

So this piece of the prism indicates immediate life with Jesus in the body.

But then there are those Scriptures that indicate some sort of intermediate state:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thes 4:13-17).

Paul also writes:

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:51-55)

So this part of the prism indicates that we all will be resurrected together at the end, as a final triumph over death.

*“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully.”*

John Calvin wrote, “Many torment themselves overmuch with disputing as to what place the souls occupy” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.25.6).

Do you or I have all the answers? NO! But there is a common thread through this all. Do you see it? What is most important? There is life after death. Life triumphs over death for the believer.

How do you prepare? By sincerely answering the question that Jesus asked Martha: *Do you believe this?*

If so, then you will receive eternal life. The fool ignores it, for it will come without warning.

AMEN