



The Worker

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What Is the Meaning of Life?

From time to time all of us have asked ourselves such questions as, "What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? Is there life after death?" In the Book of Ecclesiastes, God gives us the answers to such questions. He inspired King Solomon to look at his life and his search for happiness in worldly pursuits like entertainment, wealth, alcohol, sex, etc. For much of his life, Solomon forgot about God and lived for himself. He concluded that such a life was "vanity and grasping for the wind" (Eccl. 4:16).

Finally, the wise king concluded, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14). There is the reason for our being: to serve our Creator and spend eternity with Him! Anything else is a waste of life, especially since we must one day give an account to God for such a selfish existence.

At the beginning of each new year people often re-examine their lives and make resolutions to change for the better. As you do so, ask yourself if you are living your life to the fullest, the way your Creator meant you to? Are you living in obedience to His word, the Bible? We at the church of Christ want to help you do this. Why not contact us today and start the new year off right?

- Travis L. Quertermous preaches for the church of Christ at Foristell, Foristell, MO.

Suffering

In the eyes of the non-believer, there is no surer condemnation of Christian beliefs than the existence of Human suffering in the creation of a benevolent God. The oft-repeated refrain goes something like this: "If God exists, and loves us, then why does He let us suffer?" Indeed, many believers struggle with this same question, especially in times of hardship, bereavement or sickness. There are numerous explanations for the presence of suffering and evil in our world, all essentially pointing to the same source: the actions of man. We did not all inherit the sin of Adam, but we did inherit many of the consequences; namely, expulsion from an earthly paradise, and physical death. Given more writing space, it is easy to trace the root of human pain and suffering to their original cause: a misuse of the free will that a benevolent God could only give to His most beloved creation. However, this article's purpose is not to argue the weakness of this atheistic argument, but to highlight the positive side of suffering to the Christian.

First of all, Christ never hid the fact that we should be prepared to suffer for His name: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake." There are several other places in which we are told that to suffer for Christ is both commendable and requisite: however, realizing the necessity of suffering does not always make it easier to bear. It only shows us that we are not alone or isolated in what we must undergo.

There is, indeed, a positive side to hardship, pain, and suffering. It is one of the most supreme of all blessings: perspective. Had we never tasted a lemon, could we appreciate the sweetness of lemonade? It is the same with all "sour" aspects of life. Without experiencing the bad, how could we appreciate the good? We can apply this principle from the smallest inconvenience to the greatest.

If Adam and Eve had seen what it was like outside the garden, would they have eaten the fruit? We know that, as Christians, we are promised a rest when our labors end. How much more then, is that rest worth to him who labored greatly? How much more beautiful a promise of heavenly bliss must be to those whose earthly lives were anything but blissful? Our struggles here don't deny, but rather emphasize, the love our God shows us by offering us something better than anything we have ever experienced in this life.

"There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God"---Hebrews 4:9

- Stefano R. Mugnaini preaches for the Cairo church of Christ in Cairo, GA

In His Right Hand...a Scroll

Eric Welch

Revelation 5:1 reads *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.* To understand the full impact of that wonderful verse, an understanding of how scrolls were made at the time is helpful. Strips from the stem of a papyrus reed were laid vertically side by side on a flat surface. Holding them together was a layer of glue and then a second layer of strips placed on top the first layer horizontally. The sheets were pressed and then connected to other sheets to make a scroll. The scroll was rolled up, the end dabbed with molten wax, and the owner's seal stamped into the wax, especially for legal documents. The more important the document, the more seals it had.

The fascinating thing about this verse is the emphasis on the fact that "the scroll in the hand of him who sat on the throne" had writing "on the backside" (cf. Ezekiel 2:9-10). Normally writing was done on only one side, called the recto, because the fibers of the strip were horizontal and it made writing on it easier. If you flipped it over to write on the back (the verso) you would see the bottom layered strips running vertically, but that would have meant writing against the grain and over the bumps and ridges. The writing would have been difficult. Writing on the backside was so rare that a technical name was even given to it: opisthograph. This rarity causes the viewer of the vision to take special note of it.

Why would anyone write on the back if it was so difficult? Scrolls were expensive, and the poor would have been compelled to do so. Another reason would have been to keep all the contents in one place, especially legal documents such as wills. The document would have been self-contained, complete. No additional scrolls would be needed. All the contents pertaining to that legal matter were on that one scroll; nothing was omitted that needed to be there.

Like parables, visions contained earthly objects familiar to the viewer in order to convey a special heavenly meaning. Once John saw the scroll with writing on both sides in the vision, he would have grasped the meaning instantly. The scroll John saw in heaven contained God's complete will for ALL humanity in the immediate future. He, not Rome, was in control. The scroll indeed contained the persecution that God's people would endure, but it also contained justice and victory over their oppressors in the end.

Isn't the same true today? Human destiny is still in God's right hand. Nothing escapes Him. Regardless of the government a child of God finds himself in, whether republic, communist or dictatorship, God has the final say and His people the final victory. May this be a comfort in trouble times. This is just a taste of our study of Revelation in the summer.

Smile a While

A Sunday school teacher began her lesson with a question, "Boys and girls, what do we know about God?" A hand shot up in the air. "He is an artist!" said the kindergarten boy. "Really? How do you know?" the teacher asked. "You know-'Our Father, who does art in Heaven...'"

Hamburg Pike Happenings

The ladies of the congregation are invited to attend a ladies' Bible class Saturday morning, Jan. 31st from 10:00 - 11:00 A.M. at the church building. Stephanie Welch will be teaching. The plan is to have the class on the last Saturday of each month. We'll be studying about various ladies from the Gospel of Luke. If anyone would like more information about the class, see Stephanie.

The next Monday Night for the Master group meeting is Monday February 1st at 6:00 pm.

A Men's breakfast is scheduled for February 7th 8:00 am at the building. Please join us for a time of fellowship, prayer and a good meal.