

En route to eternity



Where does the human soul end up?

Do heaven and hell exist?

Are you prepared for eternity?

The value and eternity of man. Have you ever wondered what happens to a person when they die? Have you thought that you are an eternal being whose life goes on after death? The body we have now is like a house that decays and disappears, but the inhabitant, or soul, inside the house is eternal. The soul will continue to exist even after the human body dies. Our current body is only a temporary residence. It becomes clear e.g. of the following New Testament verses in which Paul and Peter compared man's body to a tabernacle:

- (2 Cor 5:1) For we know **that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved**, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

- (2 Peter 1:13,14) Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; 14 Knowing that shortly **I must put off this my tabernacle**, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.

Some say we do not have an eternal soul separate from the body. According to them, when a person dies and the body rots, it marks the end of all existence.

However, these people cannot prove their point of view. It's based on the belief that when you die, everything stops, but how can this be proven right? This view is also at odds with many operating room experiences where a person can see the procedures performed on themselves outside the body. If these experiences are genuine, it refers to the separate existence of the soul or spirit outside the body.

Where does the human soul end up? If the human soul continues to exist after death, then where does the human soul end up? One common view in this area is the doctrine of

reincarnation. It assumes that our soul will move to a new body immediately or after some time. In the Eastern conception, man can also be reborn in the form of an animal, but in Western countries it is generally believed that man remains human at all times.

The biggest problem with the doctrine of reincarnation, however, is that we do not remember past lives. If reincarnation were true, we would have to remember something from past lives, because even from present life we can remember thousands of events. But why don't we remember? This alone should suffice to disprove this idea.

Even H.B. Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, and perhaps the person who made the doctrine of reincarnation best known in the West in the 19th century, has admitted that we have no memories of past lives.

Maybe we can say that in the life of a mortal person, there is no such suffering of the soul and body that would not be the fruit and consequence of some sin that has been committed in a previous form of existence. But on the other hand, his current life does not include even one memory of those.

So what is the response of the Christian faith to this? According to it, there are only two options where a person goes: heaven or hell. There is no intermediate space between these, but the final abode of the human soul is in either of these places. This view is based especially on the authority of Jesus Christ. He spoke of heaven and hell more than anyone else, and he certainly has knowledge of cross-border conditions because he is the Son of God who came from heaven to earth (*John 6:38 38 For I came down from heaven...*). He also said: " *23 And he said to them, You are from beneath; I am from above: you are*

of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins. " (John 8:23,24).

Jesus' warnings about hell and the possibility of going to heaven should therefore be taken seriously. If there was no hell, why would he have warned against mere non-existence? Among other things, the following verses refer to the existence of hell and judgment before it:

- (Rev 20:12-15) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, 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.**

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: **and they were judged every man according to their works.**

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 **And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

- (Matt 25:41,46) Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, **into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

46 And these shall **go away into everlasting punishment:** but the righteous into life eternal.

- (Matt 8:11,12) And I say to you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

12. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth

- (2 Thess 1:9) **Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

- (Matt 16:26) **26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

Horrifying near death experiences give us a particular reason to take the continuation of life, and especially the possibility of damnation, seriously. For example, Maurice Rawlings, who has resuscitated clinically dead people for decades, states in two of his books that nearly all of the people who were interviewed right after resuscitation had had painful and horrifying experiences (Doctor Charles Garfield Kastenbaum reports the same in his book "Is there life after death?"). He stated that many times these painful experiences quickly fade into the subconscious, but if patients were immediately interviewed after resuscitation, we would likely see as many bad experiences as we see good ones. He writes about one such incident in his book "Beyond death's door" (p. 12, 13):

Before I collected material for this book, I personally regarded most of the after-death experiences as the product of imagination or guesswork. I believed most of the cases that I had heard or read to have been euphoric delusions, caused by a lack of oxygen. Then, one evening in 1977 I revived a terrified patient who said he was in Hell. He begged me to pull him out of Hell and prevent him from

dying. When I realized how real fear he was experiencing, I was frightened as well. The patients I have run into later, who have had these kinds of experiences, have aroused in me a compelling urge to write this book. Now I am sure that there is life after death and that all conditions after death are not good.

There are also descriptions of cross-border life. For example, in Luke 16, Jesus told of a rich man in the hell he had fallen into after this life. In addition, one description of the afterlife can be found in the 17th-century preacher John Bunyan's book *Visions of Heaven and Hell* (*The same person has also written the well-known "Pilgrim's progress", the most widely used Christian book since the Bible.*). This book mentions a person in the hell. This person recounts how he regretted not having taken the matter of salvation seriously, but had repeatedly turned his back on the call of God. Are you a similar person who is arrogant and indifferent to the most important thing?

Oh, damnable, nasty! Damned for ever! How foolishly have I done to myself! Of what stupid absurdity was I guilty as I chose the pleasure of sin for a short time at the price of high eternal torment? How often to me was said that it would happen like this? How often was I warned to give up the paths of sin that certainly would lead me to cells of eternal death! But I, like a deaf, did not listen to those warnings even though they warned so wisely. They said to me often that my short pleasure will soon change into eternal torment. And now my too sad experience says to me it, it really says, but it is too late to help because my eternal part has been determined for ever.

"Why was I given the chance? Why had I been equipped with an immortal soul? Why did I not care about it? Oh,

how my own neglect pierces me so dreadfully and I still know that I cannot and will not die. But to live a deadly life is worse than ten thousand deaths, and I still could have been helped once but I did not want to! Oh, this is the gnawing worm that never dies. Once, I could have been happy; once I was offered salvation but I rejected it. If it had happened only once and I would have rejected it, even that would have been unforgivable foolishness, but it was offered to me a thousand times, and I resisted it as often (so lousy I was). Damn the sin, which with its deceitful enjoyment enchants mankind to eternal destruction! God called me often but I resisted Him as often. He reached out his hands but I did not care. How often did I go against His commands, how often I resisted His reprimands! But now, the situation has changed, for now He follows my accident and mocks the ruin that has come for my part. He could have helped me then, but I did not want His help. Therefore, these eternal pains are just a reward for my own deeds and I am condemned to suffer." (John Bunyan, *Näkyjä taivaasta ja helvetistä* [Visions of Heaven and Hell], p. 66-68)

If hell exists, is it God's will for man to get there? The direct answer to this is: God wants the salvation of every human being, but man himself can reject salvation, as was shown in the previous quote. God has not made man robots, and will not save anyone by force, but man himself must make a choice as to whether or not he wants to be saved. God's will to save every human being and his love for us is manifested e.g. in the following verses:

- (1 Tim 2:3,4) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of **God** our Savior;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- (2 Peter 3:9) ...**The Lord** is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

- (John 3:16) **For God so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, **that whoever believes in him should not perish**, but have everlasting life.

Under what conditions will a person be saved? Since it is a question of God's kingdom and heaven, the first premise is that we must act on God's terms.

So what are the essentials in this area? In this regard, it is worth paying attention to the following points:

The unrepentant do not inherit the kingdom of God. First, the question of who goes to hell. The answer to this is simple. All the wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God, as the following verses show:

- 1 (Cor 6:9,10) **Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived:** neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

- (Rev 22:14,15) Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie.

But but. That's not all. Although each of us has committed some sin and injustice, one can be forgiven when He turns to God, repents of his sins, and confesses them to God. Also Paul, before his conversion, was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but he was forgiven. So he wrote of God's grace to himself as follows:

- (1 Tim 1:12-16) And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, **putting me into the ministry;**

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 However, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Sins, therefore, do not prevent man from inheriting eternal life. Instead, unrepentance and not wanting to repent of one's sins is an obstacle to salvation. Therefore, we must act like the prodigal son in the parable of Jesus, who turned to his father and confessed his sins. The same thing, confession of sins, is necessary even after we have already come to faith and then

fall into sin again. We are not completely free from sin even after salvation. Therefore, we need to confess our sins as soon as possible.

In any case, Jesus' parable of the prodigal son shows well how we should act if we want to inherit eternal life. The prodigal son of the parable was immediately forgiven after confessing his sins and turning to his father:

- (Luke 15:11-20) 11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided to them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave to him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you,

19 And am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

The following verses also suggest how we should confess to God our sins that weigh on our minds.

- (1 John 1:9) **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- (Prov 28:13) He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.

Don't reject Jesus! Turning to God in prayer is therefore the first step to salvation. God does not save anyone automatically, but man himself must turn to God.

However, man as such is not saved by repentance, or any act by which man tries to approach God. Through them we cannot receive salvation because we are far from perfect. Therefore, everyone should understand that man himself is like a drowning man in relation to salvation, who cannot help himself. He has no chance to help himself, but salvation and help must come from outside.

How, then, will this matter be resolved? The answer is simple. When a person realizes that he cannot save himself, the gospel of forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, comes to help (*Col. 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*). He is like a lifeboat or a lifeline on which a person can put his whole life. In fact, the entire New Testament tells us how Jesus took our sins on the cross so that they would not be an obstacle between God and us. The following verses refer to how God was in Christ Jesus and how sins are atoned for through Him:

- (2 Cor 5:18-20) **And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ**, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God.

- (1 John 4:9,10) In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So when we turn to Jesus Christ in prayer and welcome Him into our lives, we can have forgiveness of sins and salvation. He is the only way to connect with God because He has borne our sins on the cross. If we reject him, we will have to pay for our sins in hell ourselves. So do not reject Jesus, but welcome Him into your life. Jesus' position as a savior becomes clear e.g. in the following verses:

- (John 6:67-69) Then said Jesus to the twelve, Will you also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, **Lord, to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life.**

69 And we believe and are sure that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God.

- (John 14:6) Jesus said to him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.**

- (John 5:39,40) Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have **eternal life**: and they are they which testify of me.
40 **And you will not come to me, that you might have life.**

- (Acts 10:43) To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name **whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.**

- (Acts 13:38,39) Be it known to you therefore, men and brothers, **that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins:**

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

If you have welcomed Jesus into your life and put your faith in Him in the matter of salvation (*Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.*), you can pray, for example, as follows:

The prayer of salvation. Lord, Jesus, I turn to You. I confess that I have sinned against You and have not lived according to Your will. However, I want to turn from my sins and follow You with all my heart. I also believe that my sins have been forgiven by Your atonement and I have received eternal life through You. I thank You for the salvation that You have given me. Amen.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev 22:17)

