



12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. (Heb 11:12)

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph 2:4-9)

While on the far side of Galilee at Capernaum, Jesus was engaged in healing and teaching. When the multitudes grew too dense, He gave commandment to depart for the other side of the sea: 18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. 19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20 And Jesus saith unto him, *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* 21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, *Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.* (Matt 8:18-22) The scribe was one of the few such men of that profession to follow Jesus. He was undoubtedly like many today who are greatly exercised emotionally at hearing the Word. They are ready to follow without considering the cost. Jesus reminds the scribe of the hardships that would lie ahead in following Him. We are left to believe that this was sufficient to discourage the man. The second petitioner (the man who petitioned to first bury his father) is a bit different, and it will shed light on the subject of this devotion.

*And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.* It would be far outside the character of Christ to refuse an innocent petition to allow this man to bury an old father who lay dead at home. It is not even likely this man would have been mixed with the multitudes following Jesus had his father just passed away. It is more likely this man's father was approaching the dwindling years of his life, and his

son desired to go and spend the last days or even years with him before following Jesus. But there are more important considerations than in caring for the dying – it is witnessing to the dead about us so that they can be made alive in Christ. As we have pointed out tirelessly in previous devotions, every member of the race born of woman is dead in trespasses and sin. We are born with the inherent sin nature passed down from father Adam. We are born DEAD ON ARRIVAL. The unbelieving dead can bury the dead.

Two kingdoms coexist on this earth: the Natural and the Spiritual. All of us belong to this first world. We are all granted a life that does not deny the same vital instincts and vibrancy of the animal kingdom. Most men born of woman die in this Natural kingdom having forfeited the citizenship of Heaven which their sins preclude. But the elect of God have a dual citizenship – that of the Natural world as well as the Spiritual. Those members of society that are defined only by the natural instincts and proclivities common to fallen man are actually half-dead already. To be more precise, they are “*as good as dead.*” They will continue a little while until the breath of the natural life is withdrawn, and they die in sin and bondage to their own wills which are subject to the beck and call of Satan and his minions. We all belonged, at some point, to this Natural world alone until our souls were quickened by the Holy Spirit of God and we were drawn, as an iron chip, to the mighty Magnet of the Cross. It was not OUR doing, but rather the predestined election of God. *1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* (Eph 2:1-3)

Just as the friend of our Lord, Lazarus, lay dead to all conscious existence in a stone cold tomb, unable to lift a finger, to make any movement or project any thought, we lay spiritually dead to the benefits of Christ and His Holy Spirit ere our names were called beyond the walls of our spiritual tombs – and, like Lazarus – we responded with immediate dispatch.

How terribly sad to hear of the news of a still-born baby. Of course, with the callous decadence of our day, many are murdered ere they have the opportunity to see the beauty of a sunrise, or smell the fragrance of a rose, by means of the murderous practice of abortion. God does not look lightly upon the shedding of innocent blood. He holds the nations responsible for that tragic sin. But so many are born into this natural life still-born to faith and the Spirit. Their pitiful lack of vision, and inability to hear those truths that are detrimental to their eternal being, has barred them from grace. Though God’s grace is a free gift, it can never qualify as a gift until it is received in the heart of its object.

What did our Lord mean when He uttered these words: *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?* (John 11:25-26) He means there is no meaningful life available to man apart from that which is made available through His sacrificial death as our Lord Redeemer. *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* (John 14:6) Jesus is not simply another truth among many others – He is the ONLY Truth! He is not another way in addition to Buddha’s eight-fold path – He is the ONLY Way! He does not offer an alternate life that might be otherwise available through some other tin-horned idol – He is the ONLY LIFE! Mankind, as he descends into the abyss of a growing decadence, seems unable to even understand the simplest of biblical truths. They read the words but nothing seems to register in their demented minds. They may have excellent cameras, but no film with which to hold the image projected. Can a naturally dead person believe in Christ? Of course he can if he believed in Christ at the moment of his death! *he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* In fact, he is not truly dead, but spiritually alive eternally. READ THE WORDS!

A corollary to the above is a gem of profound truth in the next words of Christ: *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* A simple exercise of literary analysis reveals that gem. *Whosoever liveth and believeth* makes it quite clear that this faith must be exercised before the advancing angel of death carries us to our long homes. Such believers shall NEVER die! Of course, you may object, they DID die, and where is the promise? If you are asking that question, you have missed the entire import of our Lord's Words. He always has separated the natural, carnal man from the living and believing spiritual man. When Paul refers to the dead in Christ (1 Thess 4:16), he is really making reference to the alive in Christ for: *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* (Matt 22:32) But do not the gravestones of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob bear record of their death? Yes, but only the death of their mortal bodies. *The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.* (Luke 20:34-38)

*8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 6:8-11) Instead of our being dead to the Spirit and alive to sin, let us be dead to sin and alive to Christ!

There is so much more to be said of this matter, but the Word of God bears much greater authenticity than any commentary of man's understanding of it. We do not learn to drive a car, or fly a plane, by simply observing another do it. We must get behind the controls and learn firsthand. The same is even more true of Holy Scripture. Serious and solemn study of God's Word yields far greater understanding of it than any man's description of it. We live in a generation that has forgotten how to think, reason, and use logic. Reading for most is *passé*. But it is an effective means of learning and retention of that which is learned, and is multiplied seven times over the fast-foods method of research available without effort on the internet. *15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (2 Tim 2:15) STUDY is a stronger term than REVIEW. It means to diligently search the Scriptures to find Christ therein. *6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* (Heb 11:6) I seriously doubt Sunday scholars and hearers will meet the terms of this last description of DILLIGENCE!