



AND as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err. (Mark 12:26-27)

Suppose you wake up tomorrow morning, take a shower, grab a bit of breakfast, and then sit down to drink a cup of coffee and turn on the news. You are astonished to hear the newsman state that more than five billion of the world's population had been declared dead! What would run through your mind? Perhaps your first thought would be "What great tragedy has occurred to cause such a calamity?" and then "What could have been done to prevent such carnage?" Your thoughts might then turn to the welfare of your loved ones - "Are they safe?" and what of the survivors who lost dear members of family and friends in the disaster?

Well, the premise of the above situation is NOT hypothetical, but entirely true! The world Christian population is estimated to be 2.18 billion. Of course, the statistics on defining 'Christian' are very generous, to say the least. In my view, far less than 50% of those professing Christianity are devout worshippers. Those who have rejected the Son of God - the only means of approach to the Father - are already dead. 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. 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. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:1-10)

Remember the late night exchange between the prominent member of the Sanhedrin (Nicodemus) and Jesus? ³ Jesus answered and said unto him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* ⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's

womb, and be born? ⁵ Jesus answered, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* ⁶ *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* ⁷ *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* ⁸ *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:3-8) Without Christ, we are spiritually dead in this terrestrial life. If we shall be with God, we need to be made alive. It is for this reason that we must be born again. We were born at first to live a life that is only a shadow of life. While we are in this earthly life, we are, at the same time, in death. WE MUST be born again. Just as Paul says in Ephesians 2, if we have not been quickened (made alive) by the efficacious workings of the Holy Ghost in our hearts, we remain 'dead men walking.'

But those who the very elect, according to the calling and grace of God, are alive already forevermore. The love of God has purchased our salvation and election from before the foundation of the world. Even those who pass behind the veil in the final sleep on earth, do not lose a single second of life. They are, in fact, more alive today than when they expired on the deathbeds. It is a wonder to me that good Christian people constantly refer to the "dead in Christ" in the past tense since it conflicts with the promises of God. ¹³ *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.* (Rev 14:13) God did not say that the dead WERE blessed, or WILL BE blessed; but He calls them blessed in the sleep of death.

Our Lord describes the state of the dead of His people as a sleep as well. When the disciples wondered at our Lord description of the state of Lazarus as sleeping, they felt he would be OK and need not hurry to his side, but, since they did not understand death according to our Lord's description, ¹⁴ *Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.* ¹⁵ *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.* (John 11:14-15) Our Lord was glad owing to the opportunity to teach the disciples death was truly a sleep for the saints of God.

Before the Holy Ghost entered into our stone-cold hearts and drew, as an anchor is weighed, unto God, we were as good as dead. So was Abraham before God commanded him to go into a far land that He would show him. Up until that point, Abraham had no knowledge of the true God; yet, he obeyed without question. ⁸ *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.* ⁹ *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:* ¹⁰ *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* ¹¹ *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* 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.* ¹³ *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* ¹⁴ *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* ¹⁵ *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* ¹⁶ *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* ¹⁷ *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,* ¹⁸ *Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:* ¹⁹ *Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.* ²⁰ *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to*

come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. (Heb 11:8-21)

Now, let us return to that breaking news about the multitudes that have perished, and are perishing, because they have either ignored, or not received, the Word of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. You worry about the survivors and their grief. What about you, as a comfortable Christian, sitting by the way while many of your own family, friends, and neighbors perish for lack of knowledge? Should you not be busy in the work of providing them with the same hope and understanding with which you have been given? Should you not at least throw out the lifeline to those whom you have known and loved?

Perhaps you family, friends, and neighbors are not of sufficient number to justify your efforts. You are looking for a much larger venue upon whom to practice your evangelism. Does it make sense that love would count numbers and disregard those closest to its bosom? If you have no great audience for your testimony, a small audience of family and neighbors will do more good anyway -

Nazareth was a Little Place

*"Master, where shall I work today?"
And my love flowed warm and free;
And He pointed out a tiny plot,
And He said, "Tend that for Me."
But I answered quickly, "Oh, no, not there;
Not any one could see
No matter how well my task was done —
Not that little place for me!"
And His voice, when He spoke, it was not stern,
But He answered me tenderly:
"Disciple, search that heart of thine;
Are you working for them, or for Me?
Nazareth was just a little place,
And so was Galilee."*

- Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations