

PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED

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It must be a comforting thought for wicked people to think that there is no God. There are many people in the world who are like the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible says those men were “wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” Do you think the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are still alive ... somewhere?

Hello I’m Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

If there is no God then we can expect nothing beyond the grave. Whatever penalty you have already paid for your wickedness will be enough...you will die and that will be the end of it. But I cannot leave the wicked with that comforting thought! And neither does God! For the Creator of this world and universe has revealed Himself. And in revealing Himself, the Creator has also revealed the nature of human beings. A human being will live forever; a human is made of eternal seed! That’s right! You will live forever somewhere.

Jesus revealed that there will be a resurrection from the dead. On one occasion “There came to [Jesus] some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, and they asked [Jesus] a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. And the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." These Sadducees did not believe there was such a thing as a resurrection. They thought they had an unanswerable argument. And so Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live

to him." (Luke 20:27-38.) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you see, had been dead for hundreds of years when God met Moses at the bush that was burning, but was not being consumed. Out of that burning bush God spoke. God revealed to Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus knew that God was not and is not the God of the dead, but the living. Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive somewhere, awaiting their resurrection from the grave.

But what does the resurrection have to do with the punishment of wicked people? Jesus made the connection in another place, Jesus said "...as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And [the Father] has given him [the Son] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, [Jesus said], for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:26-29.) You see, the wicked will also be raised! The wicked will be brought into judgment.

Friend, you will be held accountable for your wickedness. You may think that by dying you will pay for your wickedness. But your death is NOT the worst thing that can happen to you. A far greater punishment awaits the wicked.

Jesus once told about two men who had died. One was a rich man and the other was a poor man. The rich man was wicked although he dressed in purple and fine linen and ate sumptuously every day; we do not know his name. But Jesus said that the poor man's name was Lazarus. He was extremely poor and sick. There were friends who brought Lazarus to the gate of the rich man every day so that Lazarus might find some food that might have fallen from the rich man's table. The poor man was so weak that when dogs came and licked the many sores on his body...he could not keep the dogs away. However, the poor man was a righteous man. Jesus said that the poor man died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Evidently, "Abraham's bosom" was an expression that implied a place of rest and comfort. This is probably a similar expression to what Christians say today of departed believers when they say they are "safe in the arms of Jesus."

But the rich man had a different destination. That's right. He was still alive, but in a different place. Jesus said the rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades,

being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And [the rich man] said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send [Lazarus] to my father's house--for I have five brothers--so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And [the tormented man] said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' [Abraham] said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" Friend, Jesus Christ has arisen from the dead; I ask you, do you believe Him?

If you believe what the resurrected Jesus says, there is going to be a resurrection of the wicked. Friend, you cannot escape the consequences of your life of sin by dying. But God has sent one Savior to the world, and that Savior is Jesus Christ. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should NOT perish, but should have everlasting life, for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved by Him. (John 3: 16, 17.)

Friend, the Bible says that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31.) Maybe there is the reason you persist in your wicked lifestyle. Maybe you do not believe in a "living God." Is your God dead? Is your God an idol, something fashioned by the imagination of a man? Have you constructed in your mind an image of God that is false? Or perhaps you say, "there is no God." Friend, you need to face the fact that there has been a person who has been raised from the dead, never to die again. That person is Jesus Christ. Do you believe Him? Jesus teaches that there will be a resurrection of the wicked. Will you be among that group?

Solomon wrote that we should "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.) Friend, when you die

there will be something yet for you to experience. There will be a resurrection and a judgment.

Paul wrote, "If in Christ we [Christians] have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by [one] man came death, [that's the first man Adam] by [one] man [that is, Jesus Christ] has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when [Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For [Jesus] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Paul continued, "What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" (1 Corinthians 15:19-32.) Yes friend, if there is no resurrection, you may continue in your sins and even die in your sins. But friend, your life is not over when you put aside your body. You have a destiny with God and with His Son Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote this to Christians: "we know that if the tent that is our earthly home 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 put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we [Christians] are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk [*now*] by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please [Christ]. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we [Christians] persuade others." (2 Corinthians 5:1-11.)

And so, I am attempting to persuade you to repent of your wickedness. Turn your repentant face toward Jesus. Die to your sins. Bury the man of sin in a watery grave. Come forth a new creature in Jesus Christ, forgiven, and blessed.