

## Do You Only Go Around One Time?

***“Do not marvel at this. For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves 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 5:28-29, Modern English Version)***

Have you ever heard others say things like “you only live once” or “this is the only life you’ve been given” or “you only go around one time”? As with all things, context is important. For it is true that we only live once in *this* world. For ***“... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27, ESV)***. There is no reincarnation – no living multiple lives in this world.

See, when it comes to life in this fallen world, we do only live once. Nevertheless, we don’t live only one time. For death is neither final nor unconquerable. Easter has revealed this to us. For Jesus Christ, God’s Son in our human flesh, sacrificed His life to take away our sins and reconcile us to God. And being our sin bearer, Jesus suffered the curse that our rebellious iniquities have wrought. And it cost Him His life. But He bodily rose again three days later. Death is not insurmountable. Jesus Christ, who walked out of His tomb that first Easter Sunday and revealed Himself to His disciples and to a small number of women who followed Him, showed that death can be defeated.

My friends, the separation of the soul from the body in this world, an event that people call death, is not the end of living for any of us. For Jesus said that ***“all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out.”*** And notice that Jesus said ***“all.”***

See, every human being who dies shall rise again. But this doesn’t mean that everyone will one day be in Heaven. For Jesus makes it clear that ***“those who have done good”*** will be raised ***“to the resurrection of life, [but] those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”***

This is what the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, teaches. For the Old Testament prophet Daniel pretty much had written what Jesus later said in John 5. Perhaps Jesus was even referring to Daniel’s prophecy. For Daniel said: ***“... those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2, ESV)***.

Every person who has died rises from the grave on the Last Day when the risen and ascended Lord Jesus returns. It doesn’t matter if the one who died is a Jew or a Muslim or a Buddhist or an atheist. It also doesn’t matter if the body of the deceased has already rotted away in the ground or was incinerated or was lost at sea. ***“All who are in the graves”*** shall rise again. For ***“there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15, ESV)***.

See, whether you like it or not, you won’t live only once. Even if you don’t want to live beyond your life in this world, you will rise again. Your Maker doesn’t need your permission to raise you from the dead and He also doesn’t give you a choice. ***“For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out.”*** Miraculous? Of course. Beyond the ability of human reason to explain? Most certainly.

But see, like the creation of all life, the resurrection of the flesh is a work of God, not a work of man. Therefore the **“voice”** of the One who spoke the universe into existence, **“so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible”** (Hebrews 11:3, ESV), is also able to speak life into corpses – the physical remains of which may now be undetectable to the human eye. For the Creator who out of nothing made the real and tangible world in which we now live is certainly capable of resurrecting the bodies He previously made.

Sadly, though, many people will not rejoice on this day of resurrection. For **“those who have done evil”** will rise again **“to the resurrection of judgment.”** And this means condemnation – hell. And yes, the church still teaches the existence of hell because the Bible teaches that hell is real.

But you know, Jesus didn’t come into this world to live, suffer, die, and rise again for us because He wants any person to live forever in hell. In fact, He tells us that our perdition is not His desire (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). Thanks be to God that His Son **“is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe”** (1 Timothy 4:10, ESV). For **“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them”** (2 Corinthians 5:19, Modern English Version).

My friends, God’s atonement is not limited. **“[Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”** (1 John 2:2, Modern English Version). **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”** (John 3:16, Modern English Version). By His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ has **“[taken] away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29, ESV). And our risen Lord and Savior now offers to us through His Means of Grace (the Word and the Sacraments) the forgiveness, salvation, and new life that He earned for us – even creating, through these same Means of Grace, faith within the sinner that receives and clings to the saving gifts that these Means of Grace offer.

My fellow redeemed, in this sinful world, you and I only go around one time. Yet we do not live only once. In fact, through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Means of Grace, the Christian is even born more than one time in this world (John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:3-5). For see, Jesus gives us new birth, new life, already in this fallen world. But He doesn’t do so in order that we can live forever in this corrupt world of pain, affliction, and disease. No, He gives us new and everlasting life with Himself in a kingdom which shall never end.

So, may we rejoice that through God’s saving grace we are justified before Him. For those trusting in Jesus have been washed clean of all their transgressions – they are **“the just”** (Acts 24:15, ESV) who **“will hear [Jesus]’ voice”** on the Last Day and shall **“come out”** of their **“graves”** **“to the resurrection of life”** to live eternally in God’s **“new heavens and [His] new earth in which righteousness dwells”** (2 Peter 3:13, ESV).

My friends, **“do not marvel at this.”** The empty tomb of God’s promised Messiah shows us that death has been overcome. Through the saving work of His Redeemer, God has triumphed over your sin & guilt and won for you deliverance from eternal life in hell. Baptized into the crucified and risen Lord, we now, already in this world, have unending life with God as we await the fullness

of the everlasting life He has earned for us in the glories of paradise. Our resurrected Lord has triumphed! What great hope we have! Alleluia!

Shay and I sincerely thank all those who sent us Easter cards and gifts. It's greatly appreciated. May the Lord continue to bless each of you as we celebrate the resurrection of His Son throughout the month of May. See you at worship ~ Pastor.