



5. THE EMPIRE BEYOND: Journey to Eternity

Empires throughout history have often seemed pre-occupied with life beyond death. The Egyptians especially seemed obsessed with eternity, going to incredible lengths, with their pyramids, mummification, and treasures, to take a journey to eternity. People of all religions and even no religious persuasion seem to believe in some sort of an after-life. The Bible says “God has put eternity in the hearts of people” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

John saw an angel flying through the midnight heavens with God’s final messages for humanity: *“And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting gospel to proclaim unto them that live on the earth—to EVERY nation, tribe, tongue and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:6,7).* Why the urgency? Because God’s judgment hour has arrived when he will set up his forever kingdom. That’s mighty good news for God’s friends, because they will have eternal life. But it is not good news to those who cling to sin and wrong, because eternal death will be their lot. How can we be saved from destruction? How can we have eternal life? How can we be forever young?

The angel had the answer. *“And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, **having the everlasting gospel...**” (Revelation 14:6).* The everlasting gospel (good news) is God’s solution! The gospel is firstly the gospel of God – the good news from and about God. The good news of God is that he loves us all and wants all of us to have eternity – *“For God so LOVED the WORLD that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will NOT PERISH but have ETERNAL LIFE” (John 3:16).* Which is why the angel proclaims the good news to every nation, tribe, tongue and person. The angel goes globally because God is a global God. His love is deeper than the deepest sin, longer than we can run from him, so wide it leaves none out, and so high, that it reached into heaven itself, taking the Son of God from his throne to die on an old rugged cross for everyone. (Ephesians 3:17-19; John 3:16).

This brings us to the second aspect of the gospel. It is the gospel of Christ. Ancient pagans such as the Carthaginians of Africa, the Aztecs of South America, and some believe even the Nabateans of Petra, practiced human sacrifice to turn aside the wrath of their angry gods. But our God loved us so much, that he, in Jesus Christ, became the sacrifice, taking our place. In taking our place on the cross, he clearly revealed that he values us more than himself!

But how does Christ’s death bring us eternal life? The Bible says, *“For he made him who knew NO SIN to BE SIN FOR US, that we might BECOME the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God IN him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).* *“Being JUSTIFIED (declared righteous before God) by HIS BLOOD, we shall be SAVED from wrath (destruction) through him” (Romans 5:9).* In other words, the cross is “the great exchange.” Our sin, taken by him, caused his death – because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). His righteousness, credited to us, gives us eternal life – because righteousness leads to eternal life (Romans 5:18,21).

So then, what do we have to do personally to have eternal life? This brings us to the third point about the gospel or good news. It is called the gospel of God’s grace, because it is free! Paul said, *“For by GRACE you have been saved through faith, and that NOT of YOURSELVES; it is the GIFT of God, NOT of WORKS (HUMAN EFFORT), lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).* How much does a gift cost? Nothing of course. A gift is free! You can’t earn it. Which is why the Bible says, *“a person is NOT justified (counted as righteous before God) BY the WORKS of the law...for by the WORKS of the law NO*

PERSON will be justified or counted as righteous" (Galatians 2:16). Many people of all religions (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and even many Christians) believe that by doing what is right, they will be right with their god(s). But the Bible says, No! That is not the way to be right with God and have eternal life. It's all about the truth of the spotted leopard - "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23) Can a black man become a white man, or a leopard get rid of his spots? Obviously the answer is no! So, "Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). What is the point? "As it is written: There is NONE RIGHTEOUS, no NOT ONE! For ALL have SINNED (done wrong - past tense) and FALL SHORT (present tense) of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10,23). The truth of the spotted leopard is that "You can't change yourself" - "You can't save yourself." We have nothing with which to buy the gift of eternal life. Which is why it is free!

So then how do we receive the free gift of eternal life? Firstly, we must BELIEVE, or put our trust in Christ's death for us – *"whoever believes in him...will...have eternal life" (John 3:14-16)*. Come just as you are and say, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling." Secondly, we must repent of sin – let go the sinful things we know are wrong, and turn in a new direction – the way of right (Mark 1:14,15). The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, turning from sin, that moment they are pardoned and receive the gift of eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).

Jesus is the bridge from eternal death to eternal life! When we have him we have eternal life (1 John 5:11-13). We receive Jesus by inviting him to come into our lives right now while he is knocking, as it were, at the door of our life (Revelation 3:20). What a difference it makes to our lives. We receive forgiveness with a guilt free conscience from all sin, peace of mind, a change in attitude and behavior to others, a purpose for living and a gigantic hope for the future. Why not invite Jesus into your life right now! He is the bridge from eternal destruction to eternal life. Walk across the bridge to eternity right now by putting your trust in Jesus, the emperor of the last empire.