

DCF:

Did you ever wonder what this life is all about? Did you ever wonder what God's purpose is in this world? Maybe you've wondered why pain exists, why people die. Maybe you've wondered why God chose Jesus to redeem us from sin. Why didn't He choose another way? What does it all mean? What's the ultimate purpose of God in all this?

One of the biggest movies of last year was the Avengers movie "Endgame". It wraps up the storylines of 21 movies. To truly understand all the ins and outs of the movie you'd have to watch all of the previous movies before the last one. Even then, you'd have a hard time figuring it all out. But if you just remember the purpose all of those movies were aiming for, it becomes a lot easier. The purpose? Save the world. And that last movie wrapped it up quite nicely. The good guys win.

Today the apostle Paul gives us God's end game. He takes all that God has done, all the promises, all the miracles, all the gifts that He gives to us and wraps it up into one climactic statement. Come with me today as we see "**GOD'S END GAME.**" At the end, we will rise again, death is conquered and He will rule over all. So, on we go!

Part One: We will rise

Can it be true that everyone who has ever lived in this world will rise from the dead when Christ comes again? There are many who don't believe that this is true. They look around and don't see any empirical evidence that this is the case. People die every day and there's no hard scientific evidence that there's an afterlife. Their reason tells them that once you're dead, that's it. If you take the Word of God out of the equation, this life is all you have.

That's comforting to many. For if there is nothing after this life, then it really doesn't matter what you do in life. You can lie, cheat, steal and even kill. If you can get away with it, good for you. Once this life is over, it's over. And if this life is the only one you have, well then the pain that you endure will eventually end and you won't have to deal with it any more.

People who don't believe in an afterlife hold on to this thought because they don't want to face the fact that they will pay for what they do wrong. All of us have a natural knowledge of God planted in our hearts that tells us sin will be punished. They don't want to face the fact that they sin. They don't want to face the fact that they are deserving of punishment. So they deny that there is sin. They deny that there will be a resurrection of the dead. If I believe there is no sin and no resurrection, then I won't be punished for what I did wrong.

But death is proof that sin exists. God tells us that the soul that sins shall surely die. Death came into this world through Adam, when he fell into sin in the garden of Eden. As verse 21 tells us "***For since death came through a man.***" We see the proof of this within our families. Our grandparents and greatgrandparents died. We've been to the funerals of friends and co-workers. We read the obituaries in the paper and plan out our retirements knowing there will come a point when we expire. We know, whether we want to talk about it or not, that we will die.

But here's the good news that our Savior King wants us to know today. We will rise from the dead! We will live with Him forever. Christ's resurrection from the dead is proof that we too will rise. He was the first to rise after sin and death had been conquered. It was His payment for our sins and His perfect life that makes this possible. His resurrection proves that His payment for our sin was accepted by God the righteous Judge. Because He lives, we too will live. As verse 22 says "***For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.***"

"But each in his own turn." Jesus is called the firstfruits. What does that mean? Well, it means that Jesus was the first one who rose after sin was conquered. You could say that Jesus was the first crop, and we will be the second crop. In farming, the first cutting of hay in early summer is called the first crop, knowing that there will be another harvesting of hay later on. The first crop isn't the only crop, just the first cutting with more to follow. In the same way, Christ was the firstfruits, the first crop with more to follow. And we are Christ's second crop, my friends!

Time and time again throughout the Bible God speaks of the resurrection from the dead as a fact. In the Old Testament Job says "***I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own***

eyes - I and not another." Paul talks about it here. Jesus talks about it in Matthew chapter 25. John wrote down 7 visions of the end times in Revelation. On Judgment Day Jesus will raise all people from the dead to stand before His throne. This fact brings terror to unbelievers. They will have to pay for their sins because they rejected Christ's payment. This fact will bring joy to believers, because they know they will live forever in joy with Jesus in heaven. Plus, at the Last Day, death will be conquered. It will cease to exist.

Part Two: Death will be conquered

How does that make you feel? Some say that death is a natural part of life. Or, as Disney's Lion King says "It's the circle of life." Is that true? Not really. The reason people die is because of sin. **"The wages of sin is death."** If there was no sin, there would be no death. When Adam and Eve were created, they were not created to die, but to live forever. Eternal life is God's original plan for the human race. And on the Last Day, death itself will be eliminated. **"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."**

What does that mean? It means that everyone will rise from the dead and live forever. But there's just two places where we will live. Those that didn't believe in Jesus will spend eternity in hell, separated from God's love and blessings. Believers will spend eternity in heaven, basking in the love and presence of the One who saved them.

Oh, how we will rejoice when death is conquered! On Judgment Day all our difficulties and sorrows will be in the rear view mirror of our lives. No suffering, pain, disease, disagreements, depression, despair anxiety, sadness and insecurity. No more will we struggle with trying to find ourselves or figure out what to do in life. No more worries about the kids, about finances, about careers, about viruses and masks. No, what lies ahead for believers on the Last Day is perfect joy, peace, happiness and contentment. We will be with Christ forever, our Savior, our Brother, our God. And on top of it all, we'll be with our fellow believers who died in the faith! What a day that will be, knowing that death can no longer take away our spouse, our friends, our parents or our grandparents. In heaven we will meet again, and finally meet Moses, David, and all the apostles. Death will be conquered.

And in that wonderful place we call paradise? God will rule over all.

Part Three: He will rule over all

The last verse of our text for today might be a bit hard to understand. Let's read that one again, shall we? **"When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all."** At first, it sounds as if Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, will take up a subordinate position after Judgment Day. But just exactly does this mean?

Well, first of all, remember that Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, is given the responsibility to rule this world for the benefit of believers. He is the One who primarily sends out Christians to proclaim the Gospel. He is the One who bends the events of this world to serve God's will. He is the One who will declare who is and who isn't a believer on the Last Day. He is our Prophet, Priest and King up until the Last Day. But then, after He has finished His work on behalf of all believers, He's done. Spreading the Gospel? Done. Shaping the events of this world to serve believers? Done. Judging the living and the dead? Done. Then, He turns over His offices to God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Mission accomplished. Then, God Himself - three persons yet one God, perfectly joined and yet perfectly distinct - rules all for eternity.

After WWII, thousands of soldiers came home after the fighting was over. All the battles had been won. Mission accomplished. They laid aside their rifles and backpacks. They came home to their loved ones and began to live a life that didn't include battling with the enemy. Their generals had led them to victory, and oh, how they enjoyed the fruits of their labor. In a similar sense, so will we.

Oh, how we look forward to that day, when Christ completes the mission set before Him. We look forward to that day when all the soldiers of Christ come home and are mustered out. We look forward to that day when we will join all the victorious believers in Christ in our eternal home. Come Lord Jesus, and complete your mission soon!

AMEN