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The 50-50 Question of Life

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left." **Matt 25 vs. 31-33**



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Are you a Sheep or a Goat?

By the time of the events of Matthew chapter 25 Jesus is getting close to his death on the Cross and the end of his ministry on Earth. Time is short, the big public meetings and walkabouts are over and Jesus has only time left for some final instructions and warnings for his disciples. So Jesus turns his attention to the future, in fact, to a time when he will return at the end of time to judge the Earth. He explains the signs to look out for and what he will do when he returns. In this passage he talks about what he will do to all of the people of the Earth:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

*"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." **Matt 25 vs. 31-46***

You see, sheep will follow their master; they believe that the master offers security and has their best interests at heart, whilst goats follow no-one but their own desires, wandering where they will.

Jesus says that mankind is like that, we all fall into one category or the other. So are you a sheep or a goat?

The Great Question of Life

The great question of life that many people will ponder at some point in time and the subject of years of debate for philosophers is: "**what is the meaning of life?**"

There are just two points of view to this question even though there are many variances of both; ultimately there is either a man-centric view or a God-centric view.

The Man-Centric View

In the man-centric view there is just man and the animals. In fact, man is not much different from the animals. We got here by accident and we shape our own destiny. However, when we die then that is it, the end, oblivion.

If you have ever lost a loved one and hope that one day there can be some sort of repatriation then you cannot believe in the man-centric view, however, this is the view of all Atheists, Evolutionists, Buddhists, New Ageists, Transcendentalists, Humanists and most Philosophers.

With the man-centric view there is no meaning to life, no point of our existence or purpose as we are just the result of a fantastic accident of chance. So live your life to the full while you have it for tomorrow you might die.

The God-Centric View

With the god-centric view there is a belief in a creator, someone who is more powerful than we are who is in control and created us and everything around us including the Universe.

Most variations of the god-centric view involve an after-life, where death is not the end but a crossroad to some form of good place for the good people and bad place for the bad people.

There are many and wide variations of the god-centric view, some with just one God and others with multiple gods and many varying opinions of what makes a person good and what makes a person bad.

Some will talk of intelligent design which is an unhappy compromise between recognising that the complexities of this world are too great for pure accident but stops short of accepting a God-like figure.

The subject of this debate concerns the God of the oldest religion in the world, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose son Jesus Christ said those words in Matthew chapter 25 about our eternal destiny.

For God, our purpose is to delight him, he created us and was pleased with what he had created... for a while, until sin entered into the world and spoiled it all. God devised a rescue plan to reconcile us back to him. For those who choose to be reconciled to their God there is the reward of an eternity with him in Heaven but for those who refuse there is an eternity separated from him in Hell.

The 50-50 Gamble

The question you need to ask yourself is: what view is right? Are we alone or is there a God who created us?

When intellectuals argue these points of view, inevitably the argument will find its way either to the beginning of time or the end of time.

The end of time is way too speculative for most people because it has not happened yet, so there is no evidence to work from, only prophetic writings for the Christians which are unacceptable to humanists and wild speculation from the humanists which is unacceptable to the Christians and rarely matches current trends in Human behaviour.

The beginning of time, however, is of far greater interest and sparks the most debate. The Christian would quote the first four words of the Bible: "In the beginning God". No *was* or *is* just God. The implication being that God has always been, he is not a created being and has always existed. This is risible to the Humanists who just will not accept things they cannot understand, or will they?

If we turn the question around and look at the man-centric beginning of time, most Humanists adopt Carl Sagan's "Big Bang" theory and given enough time, like 4 Billion years, you get enough fantastic chance factors all coming together to create life and all the conditions to support it. The problem for this theory is that the big bang requires a big ball of matter, so Carl Sagan would say "In the beginning matter". Where did that big ball of matter come from then?

Carl Sagan could not explain the existence of the ball of matter any more than I can explain where God comes from so we are left with a 50-50 gamble on the greatest question of life. Either the humanist is right and death is just oblivion or the humanist is wrong and in the case of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob death will mean an eternity in Hell for those who refuse to believe and be reconciled back to him. The stakes are huge.

Suppose someone told you that the plane you were about to embark on had a 10% chance of falling out of the sky, would you board that plane? Some might say that the risk was too great, others might say, my journey is important and at least there is a 90% chance that I will make it, but they would have given it some thought and would probably not be too happy about the odds.

Supposing there was a 50% chance that the plane would crash. Would you get on it now? You would be insane to risk your life on a 50% chance of death. It would be like putting a bullet in a gun with a magazine of just two rounds and then pulling the trigger whilst the gun was pointed at your head. But these are exactly the same odds that people risk their eternal destiny with.

What can you do about it?

So how can you mitigate these risk factors? Some people think that they are not really that bad a person, essentially they live good lives, respecting the law, not hurting anyone and not committing what they would consider anything too bad. So if God turns out to be real and there really is a Hell then surely they would come out OK and God would simply invite them in. A bit like hedging your bets, keep your nose clean but otherwise you are free to do what you like.

The problem is that God does not see things that way and we fail to understand how He originally created us in the beginning, his measure of what makes a good person is way higher than ours, so much so that nothing short of perfection will do. When He designed man His creation was perfect. Adam, the first man, was created in God's image and initially committed no sin, this is the only acceptable relationship that God can have with us and quite frankly this is impossible for us to do on our own.

Consider this: Have you ever lied? What would that make you? A liar! Have you ever stolen anything? What would that make you? A thief! Have you ever taken God's name or Jesus' name in vain? What would that make you? A blasphemer! Have you ever committed adultery? What would that make you? An adulterer! Have you ever killed anyone? What does that make you? A murderer! If you can say yes to any of these, at any point in your life then you have already blown it and this is not even the exhaustive set of God's conditions. Even if you resolve to be perfect for the rest of your life then you are wasting your time as you are already imperfect and fall short of the measure of God.

So the answer is: there is **nothing** that you can do about it.

Is there another way?

Fortunately yes; God devised a rescue plan that His son Jesus carried out so that we may be forgiven of our past sins and rescued from an eternity of separation in Hell.

Jesus was sent to us as much more than a human prophet but the son of God himself, constrained as a man, able to feel all the emotions of man and limited by time and location.

Jesus came to fulfil the old Mosaic Law and sacrificial system, which was only temporary, and thus create a new covenant with us, with Jesus himself as the ultimate and permanent sacrifice.

You see, the penalty for sin was death. Under the Mosaic Law you could only atone for that penalty through sacrifices that only lasted until you sinned again. When Jesus died on the Cross it was not simply at the hands of jealous men but was a carefully planned and deliberate action of God, a permanent and atoning sacrifice to rescue "His people" for all time. Because Jesus had not sinned himself He was able to be the perfect sacrifice and was given all authority in Heaven and on Earth to forgive mankind of its past sins. In addition, He provides the way back to God. Jesus said of Himself:

"I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me" **John 14 v 6**

But who are "His people"? Is this everyone? It could be, but it is not; "His people" are all those who believe on Him and accept the free gift of salvation through repentance and faith and a commitment to live the rest of their lives in obedience to Him.

So there is a requirement on us to do something to receive this gift of grace. You see we ARE guilty and rightly deserve the punishment that God has served on us, however, Jesus, the innocent, has paid the price so that we, the guilty, can go free but only if we choose it.

It is like this:

A man is in court on trial for murder, he has done the crime and he knows it, the Police have the evidence, the Judge is certain of the man's guilt and worst of all so are the Jury. The man is going down! The judge is a good and honest judge so he has to convict the man for life imprisonment because that is the law for such a crime.

Another man enters the court and announces that in his pocket he has a pardon from the Queen for the accused if he wishes it but the accused must confess the truth first and ask for the pardon which on his confession will be given freely and to satisfy the court, which must have justice, the other man will do the time instead.

What will the accused man say? Will he say: "Nah, I don't believe you; you are having a laugh, I am going to prison"? It seems unlikely, don't you think? Do you not think he would rather say: "Yes, I am very sorry, I did kill that person, please give me the pardon so that I do not need to spend the rest of my life in prison"? The accused man has to believe that the other man really does have a pardon in his pocket, to get it he has to confess, which will end any further chance of appeal, if he thought he had any. What are his chances? The other man either has the pardon or he does not, we are back to the 50-50 gamble again.

The accused is YOU, the crime is sin, the penalty is death, the other man is Jesus, the Judge is God and the pardon is Jesus' death on the cross. So why is it that so many people do not believe the other man has that pardon in his pocket and would rather go to prison? Maybe it is because they do not believe in the court, or the crime, or the penalty or the other man's credibility but what if it is all true? Examine yourself and ask what that would mean to you? Do you really want to gamble on your eternity with such appalling odds? Are you going to be a sheep or a goat?

What next?

What you just heard in that last section was what Christians call the good news or "Gospel" of Jesus Christ. The whole of the New Testament of the Bible is dedicated to that message and its implications on our lives and our future. Jesus Christ's primary purpose on earth was a rescue mission to those that would believe and turn back to God.

If this message has made sense to you then I recommend you check this out from the Bible first. If you are a Jew, God's blessed, chosen and rebellious people, then I recommend that you read the good news about Jesus from either Matthew or John's gospel account. For the rest of us Gentiles read either Mark or Luke's gospel account first.

For more information on the vital subject of your own personal salvation, may I recommend that you start with our guide to the "**5 Steps to Salvation**" that you can either read on-line from our website or download in PDF or mp3 audio format? If you wish you can contact us for a CD or hardcopy format.

The website address is:

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