



"There is no commentary that opens up the Bible so much as sickness and sorrow."

—J.C. Ryle

20-Apr-18

From Dust to Dust

A friend of mine lost her father about a year ago. She loved him very much, and his sudden death distressed her. Mary (not her real name) is pretty religious, raised in the Catholic [faith](#). The shock of his death had Mary wondering how [God](#) could have taken her father so unexpectedly. She questioned long-held beliefs about life after death and how a loving God could allow so much pain. She even wondered briefly, "What if this life is all there is?"

Trying to offer her some comfort from the Bible, I gave her some answers for her concerns, sharing with her some of what the church teaches. Hopefully, the following points, inspired by Mary's grief, will help us when we must face our own times of sorrow.

The composition of humanity can tell us a great deal. Knowing that God made us of flesh reminds us of how fragile we are. In [Genesis 2:7](#), we read that "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." The Hebrew word for "being" is *nephesh*, and four times in Genesis 1 and 2, God inspired this same word to refer to birds, cattle, every animal He created. Like the animals, we are also composed of the same earthy elements.

The *New English Translation* renders [Ecclesiastes 3:19](#) as, "For the fate of humans and the fate of animals are the same: As one dies, so dies the other; both have the same

breath. There is no advantage for humans over animals, for both are fleeting." Psalm 90, written by [Moses](#), tells us that human life spans about seventy years. Some live more years; many others live fewer. The frailty and brevity of this life are often bitter truths, but they are realities that we must confront.

While the first death is something that all men and women face ([Hebrews 9:27](#)), many verses compare dying to sleep. In [Psalm 13:3](#), David prays, "Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." [Acts 7:60](#) relates the martyrdom of Stephen, and as he was being stoned, he "cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep." The apostle Paul uses this metaphor in describing Jesus' resurrection in [I Corinthians 15:20](#), saying that He "has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." When we sleep, we do not sense the passage of time. [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#) says that "the dead know nothing."

Paul writes in [I Corinthians 15:16](#), 20-23:

But if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. . . . But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the [resurrection of the dead](#). For as in Adam all die, in Christ *all* shall be made alive. But each one in his own order. . . ." (Emphasis ours.)

The first death, then, is not the end, as the Bible speaks of more than one resurrection. The first resurrection, also called the "better resurrection" ([Hebrews 11:35](#)), is the raising of Christians to eternal spirit life at Christ's return. In [Job 14:14-15](#), Job asks, "If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands." [Isaiah 26:19](#) adds: "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; . . . and the earth shall cast out the dead." [Revelation 20:4-6](#) describes this resurrection in more detail.

There is also a second resurrection, the resurrection of unconverted humanity ([Matthew 12:41](#); [Revelation 20:5](#)), which will occur far in the future. In this period, called the Great White Throne Judgment (see [Revelation 20:11-13](#)), all who have ever lived will be raised to physical life, have their understanding returned to them, and be offered God's Spirit. They will have their first real opportunity to understand and choose to live God's way.

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When we pass from this life, our spirits—a recording of our entire lives—return to God, and we sleep in the dust ([Ecclesiastes 12:7](#)). As Ezekiel 37 exemplifies, in the second resurrection, all humanity will be raised to physical life, and their spirits will return to them. As other verses show, worldwide healing will take place at that time—the lame will leap like a deer, the mute will sing, the blind will see, and the effects of this life's physical infirmities will no longer be a hindrance as men, women, and children arise to life and receive understanding about the way God wants them to live. He will offer all these billions the opportunity for eternal life. [I Corinthians 15:49](#) affirms confidently, "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."

Perhaps most importantly, we need to remember that God does care. [Jesus](#) says in [Luke 12:6-7](#): "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins [about fifty cents each]? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." [Matthew 10:29](#) declares that not even one of these inconsequential birds falls to the ground apart from our Father's will.

Although we are far from perfect, all human beings are the created children of our perfect Father, the Almighty God. He sent His Son into this Creation so that He could overcome [Satan](#) and pay the death penalty for each person's repented sins ([I John 2:2](#)). God loves all of His created beings and is not willing that any should perish but that all should turn and voluntarily choose His way of life ([II Peter 3:9](#)). Still more, God is faithful to reward those who have lived their lives well (see [Hebrews 6:10](#); [11:6](#)).

My friend, Mary, somewhat understands God's loving concern, but she admits, "It's so hard when you don't see them again." And it is true: Death is a dreadful enemy ([I Corinthians 15:26](#)). It is also a reality. George Washington seems to have understood this, as his response to a friend's condolence on the loss of a beloved nephew shows: "It is a loss I sincerely regret, but as it is the will of Heaven, whose decrees are always just and wise, I submit to it without a murmur."

It may be difficult for us at times, but we also need to trust God's decisions. As with all things mortal, our lives will have to end at some point, and we can pray that God will provide mercy in our death. But even in death, there is [hope](#) in God. The love of our God is stronger than death.

There is so much more beyond this imperfect life that proceeds for such a short time from dust to dust. Because God cares, He has given His promise that we will rise to new life and see our loved ones again. God is the Sovereign, and in spite of how it looks at

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times, all things are under His control, and He has not left us to fend for ourselves.

As Paul writes in [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#), we can take comfort in these words.

- John Reiss

World News Highlights

[Reviewing the Record of 21st Century Islam](#)

MercatorNet 11-Apr-18

[Dear Christians, There Is One Thing Worse Than Being an Atheist](#)

The Daily Wire 04-Apr-18

[Drought Returns to Huge Swaths of U.s., Fueling Fears of a Thirsty Future](#)

Pew Trusts 17-Apr-18

[Macron Warns of European 'Civil War' Over Growing East-West Divide](#)

Yahoo/The Telegraph 17-Apr-18

[What the @\\$%! Americans Can't Get Through the Day Without Cursing](#)

The New York Post 18-Apr-18

[Smartphone Addiction Increases Loneliness, Isolation; No Different From Substance Abuse, Experts Say](#)

StudyFinds 19-Apr-18

[Suicide Machine Draws Crowds at Amsterdam Funeral Show](#)

Yahoo/AFP 14-Apr-18

[Americans Waste 150,000 Tons of Food Per Day: Study](#)

Yahoo/AFP 18-Apr-18

[Gender Equality: All Male Choir Told It Must Permit Women Members](#)

The Daily Wire 05-Apr-18

[Washington, D.c., May Allow 16-Year-Olds to Vote for President in the 2020 Election](#)

USA Today 17-Apr-18

Church News & Special Announcements

Joshua and **Devon Mimms** of Woodstock, Georgia, are thrilled to announce the birth of their daughter, **Meredith Joy Mimms**. She arrived at 2:28 PM on Sunday, April 15, 2018, just a short time after the family requested prayers for Devon's prolonged labor. Devon delivered the baby by herself, as the midwife arrived five minutes too late. Meredith weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and measured 20-1/2" long. Thank you for your prayers for God truly delivered. She is **Ronny and Ali Graham's** fifth grandchild, and **John and Evelyn Ritenbaugh's** twenty-third great grandchild. Devon and Meredith are doing fantastic. Congratulations!

16-Apr-18

New Transcripts

[1418c: A Dry and Weary Land](#)

Given by Martin G. Collins on 10-Feb-18

[1428c: Shaped by the News](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 14-Apr-18

Prayer Requests

New prayer request updates have been posted for the following people:

[Chloe Aschenbrenner](#)

[Devon Mimms](#)

[Devon Mimms](#)

[Sashi Mwila](#)

[Tara Prescott](#)

[Matthew Schindler](#)

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Resurrection From the Dead](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh asserts that all the hopes of a Christian revolve around the Day of Trumpets, placed like an axle or fulcrum, right in the middle of the Holy Days. Our entire lives revolve around the hope of a resurrection from the dead, a powerful motivator to walk in righteousness. Of the three major characteristics of God (faith, hope, and love), hope, deriving from Christ's Resurrection, gives the other two impetus and energy. Our hope consists of living the quality life God lives forever, knowing Christ intimately, sharing all of His experiences throughout eternity (Psalm 17:15; Philippians 3:10; John 17:3; Romans 8:17; Revelation 19:7-8)

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Beatitudes, Part Three: Mourning](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Blessedness and mourning seem contradictory to our way of thinking, but obviously Jesus saw spiritual benefits to sorrow. John Ritenbaugh shows why true, godly mourning gets such high marks from God.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study will be **Acts (Part 21)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh** on **Friday 20-Apr-18**. The Bible Study will be continuously available from **6:00 pm Friday** until **12:00 pm Saturday (EST)**.

Daily Audio Programs

Hear previous sermons, sermonettes, and Feast of Tabernacles messages, **Sunday through Friday**. [Available from the homepage](#).

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Sunday 22-Apr-18 In the Last Days
Monday 23-Apr-18 Life Is Service (Part Two)
Tuesday 24-Apr-18 Listening
Wednesday 25-Apr-18 Guile
Thursday 26-Apr-18 Habakkuk: A Prophet of Faith (Part Two)
Friday 27-Apr-18 The Christian Medal of Honor

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