

Dead Men See God

by Shane Idleman

The sermon 'Dead Men See God' emphasizes the importance of being prepared for Christ's return and living a life separate from the world.

Duration: 29:58

Scripture: Matthew 24:36, John 10:10, Romans 6:11, 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 2 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Spiritual Death"

Description

This sermon discusses the concept of death as separation from the body to be present with Christ for believers, highlighting the contrasting reactions of those who know the Lord and those who do not. It delves into the understanding of what happens at death, emphasizing the eternal nature of the spirit and the resurrection of the body. The sermon also explores the idea of being prepared for Christ's return and the importance of being dead to the world to draw closer to God.

Transcript

So on this sermon, Dead Men See God, the first point of application is this. Death is separation from the body to be present with Christ for believers. I've seen people face with death coming on quickly.

We're talking weeks. And I've seen people who knew the Lord and those who didn't know the Lord. And it's frightening, because those who know the Lord, yeah, who's not a little bit afraid of death? Many of us are, because we don't know what's on the other side.

I'd like to get my kids raised first, you know. But there's peace there, because they know that they're going to spend time with the Creator. Those who don't know the Lord, you'll see either extreme anger and lashing out and cursing or screaming, or now when the Bible says gnashing of teeth, you know exactly what it's talking about.

If you've seen somebody getting ready to die who doesn't know where they're going, there's a big difference. So that's the point of application. Death is separation from the body to be present with Christ for an unbeliever.

So what happens at death? Now this could take a whole hour, or two, right, or three. But we are body, soul, and spirit. And nobody knows exactly the makeup of that.

But you live in a body, you have a soul, your emotions, your intellect, who you are, but you are spirit, you are eternal. Now the Bible often interchangeably will use the word soul. Rachel, I remember in Genesis, Rachel, her soul was departing as she was bringing in her son Benjamin.

So the Bible uses soul departing. And there's a side of us, this body, it's very interesting, is just the vessel. It's just this earthen vessel that God, that we move in, we minister in.

But once we die, the body stays and the spirit goes eternally, either to be with God or to be eternally separated from him. So that's what happens at death. So that's why at memorial services for Christians, we call it a celebration sometimes.

My mom has already told me, she's getting older, let it be a celebration if she goes before I do. Or not this morning, but the celebration of life, because she's passing from death to spiritual life, to eternity. Now on that spectrum of death and separation, on this side of the pendulum is a group that would believe in that there's no resurrection.

The resurrection occurs when you die. And then on this end of Christianity, my microphone sounds different, right? Everywhere I move, that's why it's got to stay in the middle. Believes in, have you heard of soul sleep? Anybody heard of soul sleep, just me? This is where the soul is just sleeping, long nap, until it's time to be resurrected.

Well, both of those, I believe are incorrect. The Bible, Paul says to be absent in this body is to be present with Christ. Now within that though, there is, and I don't know how it works, but there's a resurrection that we will have, like Jesus had a body.

He could pass through a wall and he still wanted to eat food and he could be in certain places. This resurrected body is glorified, it hasn't been corrupted. The DNA of Adam is gone.

So when we die and our body stays here, it dies, it goes back into the earth. That DNA of Adam, that Adamic nature, that sin nature cannot inherit the kingdom of God. So the resurrection, the spirit goes and is with the Lord.

And there comes a time when the bodies will be resurrected. And maybe I should do a whole study on this, because people are kind of confused, it looks like. And walk through all the scriptures on the resurrection.

And our bodies will be resurrected and we'll get a new body. And that's how we will live from that point forward. But what happens in the interim? What happens with that? We're present with Christ.

We know that we are present with him. So again, back to 1 Corinthians. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Neither does corruption inherit incorruption. So 1 Corinthians, let me read before the 1535, the NIV. I'm switching over the NIV.

But someone will ask, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come? Paul says, how foolish. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And you might say, why is Paul saying how foolish? Well, the verse before this one says, Paul says, sober up as you ought and stop sinning.

For some of you are ignorant of God. I say this to your shame. So he's saying, sober up, stop sinning, some of you.

I'm saying this to your shame, that you need to sober up. What we talked about, live in the word of God. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just the seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed, he gives to his own body. So in a nutshell, what you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Do you know that a seed actually dies? When you plant the seed, it dies to give life. You don't plant a broccoli bush. You plant a seed, and that seed dies.

And then you don't really know what it is until it begins to come forth and bring that life. So again, 1 Corinthians 15, I'll keep reading. Paul continues, not all flesh is the same.

People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies, but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of earthly bodies is another. So when you sow, you plant the seed, not the plant, just like I said, the sin, nature, the DNA of Adam goes into the earth, our body, our corruption, our corrupted body goes into the dirt, and we are no more, and our spirit goes up to be with the Lord.

And then now, here's where it comes about the rapture. If you have your Bibles, you can turn to 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Thessalonians 4, and we'll talk about the rapture, verse 13. Let me see if my battery's going low, if that's what it is.

Because it's fading in and out a lot, quite a bit. I don't know why. Maybe the devil doesn't like this message.

He's trying to distract us. 1 Thessalonians 4, 13, brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death. So he's saying, we don't want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope.

See, that's why people grieve, is they have no hope at all. Do I need to grab a different mic, or is this one okay? It's okay, okay. Just mine, it's going in and out and in and out and up and down.

As long as you can hear, that's fine. So I don't want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you grieve like the rest of mankind. So he's informing the people.

They thought when somebody died, that they were not gonna see the Lord. They're like, oh no, Jesus is coming back, and they died before he came back. Oh, that would be sad, wouldn't it? You think they lost out.

But Paul's just saying, no, no, no, I don't want you to be uninformed. Those who have died, they don't have to grieve, just like the rest of mankind who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

And I wanna stop for a minute right here. Paul says we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and I just wanna throw it out there. Do you? Do you, because that's why we're here, and I've talked to so many people who have no relationship with God, and they'll say, yes, Shane, I believe in Jesus.

They don't believe in Jesus. What they're saying is I heard the story about Jesus when I was little, and I think there might be something out there I believe. No, that's not belief.

That's actually an agnostic. Belief comes from the word, I believe it's pistouho. I can't pronounce it exactly, pistouho.

It means to put complete trust into. To believe means I'm putting my complete trust into Jesus Christ, come hell or high water, he is my Lord and my Savior. I don't care what happens tomorrow.

I'm putting my complete trust into him. He's my Lord, he's my Savior. I believe in him unconditionally.

That's belief. Your whole life is given, you can't say, I believe in Jesus because I heard a story when I was little, and I go to church, but I don't live for him at all. That's not believing in Jesus.

That's having a concept of God that you might consider some day as you get older. But that's not belief. So he said, for those of us who believe in Jesus and that he rose again, we will see him again.

Verse 15, according to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. So this is important, I'm getting to the point of the rapture here that a lot of people believe in, which I do if you're, you know, according to scripture. So he's saying, Paul's saying this, those who are still alive and who are left, when the Lord comes, they're not gonna go before those who have died.

They're not gonna go before those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ, which are dead in Christ, which have died before, the believers, those of us still living, those who have died many, many years ago, they will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord.

There's your rapture verse right there. Caught up, catching away. And as we talked about before, the word rapture's not there and the word rapture comes from Jerome, who is translating the Vulgate, it's called the Latin Vulgate, the Bible into Latin.

He used this word, I believe it's rapturo in the Latin. It's where we get our word rapture from. So it all means the same thing, a catching up, a catching away, a caught up, a rapture, this something going up to meet the Lord in the air.

And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. So it's actually very encouraging because he's saying that those who are dead will rise up when Jesus Christ comes again, those who are living and those who are dead will rise up and meet the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, not everybody believes in the rapture. Have you ever heard of a man named N.T. Wright? He's very well known in England. Some things I don't agree with him on justification, different areas of salvation.

But he said this, Paul's mixed metaphor of trumpets blowing and the living being snatched into heaven to meet the Lord are not to be understood as literal truth, as the Left Behind series suggests, but as a vivid and biblical description of the great transformation of the present world of which we now speak, or which he speaks elsewhere. And I read that 10 times now. I'm like, not quite following there.

Sometimes, just remember, sometimes, I hope we don't use this one on our website. We'll use tomorrow's so I can say this. But just because someone's smarter than you doesn't mean they're always right.

Because this guy is smart and he's a theologian. Okay, I'm not up there in that class. But when you read, the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command and the voice of the archangel with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first and after that, those who are still alive and are left will be caught up together.

I would have to take that literally. I understand allegory, where you're telling stories. I understand figurative language.

But this seems pretty literal that Paul's explaining how it's going to work. So being caught up. So is this gonna happen before all the bad stuff happens? Is this gonna happen after all the bad stuff happens? And there's differing opinions on that.

Again, you could read this. It has all the different views. But the whole point is are you ready? Are you ready for Christ's return? Personally, I prefer just going like this and avoiding death, of course.

But that's where this whole point of the rapture comes from. And then what people try to do is they pull in Revelation. They're pulling other passages.

They'll take Matthew 24 and then they'll try to pinpoint when this rapture is. And I can't do that. I've looked at all sides and I know Christ is coming.

I know we need to be prepared. I know we need to be ready. Those who are living are going to meet with those.

And I can't tell you when exactly that's gonna happen. I don't think we're supposed to know. I think it's gonna get difficult and persecution's going to come as we see.

It's not going to get easier. It's gonna get more difficult and more difficult and more difficult. But it's also gonna open up the gospel in many different ways.

I think there's some stories out now about Bruce Jenner. He wants to go back to being a guy because he's learning that going against God's standard is not bringing the joy and the peace and fulfillment. I mean, don't quote me on that, but there's a lot of different sources.

My point is look at where, 50 years ago, this stuff would have, what even, we haven't even talked about. But now how far we've drifted in such a short amount of time and people say, well, Shane, that's progress. No, that's called digression.

That's not progression, that's digression. Anytime you're diverting away from the word of God, you are in digression away from the word of God. You're calling evil good and good evil.

So the church has to be prepared. And one of my concerns about the teaching that we're all out of here before it gets tough is what about if it gets tough? Because if you don't live for him today, you will not die for him tomorrow. The only way you're prepared to go through persecution is living in God's word.

And what they're persecuting is the light they see in you and the light they see in me. They don't like that light, they're gonna persecute it. They're gonna go after it.

So I wish I had a more definite stance for you on the rapture, harpatzo, to snatch away. Oh, that's what I'm sorry, in the Greek it's harpatzo. And in the Latin, it was rapturo.

Something's going to happen and there's great faith in that knowing that whether I'm a dead or alive, whether you're dead or alive, you will see Christ again. That we can take those promises to the bank. So that's the facts.

We'll have a new body. You need to be prepared, not caught off guard. Be ready in case he comes sooner than expected.

We're gonna get into the 10 virgins in the weeks to come too and also different things he's talking about. We always think way, way, way. The whole point of a lot of this, Jesus say, wait, be careful.

You don't know the day or the hour. So when people say, well, look, we've got, I mean, another 50 years. No, we don't, five days, five hours.

We just, we don't know. You always wanna be living for Christ. And that will actually change the way you live.

Before you click that next website, you might say, is he coming? I wanna be ready for my king. Our attitudes, anger, bitterness, holding all those things in, we wanna be ready for him. But it does beg the question, why are most people terrified about death? Well, the honest answer is because they're not ready.

Those people I've known over my life that are very close to God, very close to God, as they're going, getting close to death and know it, they're not afraid to die. They're seasons, you know, I wish I could spend time with my grandkids. I never did this, but they're ready.

That's why most people are terrified about death because they're not ready. Death is separation from the body, again, to be joined with Christ for the believer. That's why dead men see God.

The only way we're gonna see God is when we die. Dead men see God or with the rapture. So that's the first point of application.

The second point is very simple. I won't take long. Death in the Bible is also separation from the world.

And I think this point is actually gonna help a lot of people that are struggling. And the reason I think this generation struggles more so than a lot of past generations is because we are inundated with the world. I mean, I remember growing up, a cell phone? You know, you would get home later in the day to see if you have a message on the answering machine.

Internet, I mean, it was just not that much. And now, what's gonna be later? I mean, where you were at, watch, it has everything. I mean, they're just, we're inundated with the word of God, with the world, not the word of God.

So death in the Bible is separation often from the world. When Jesus says, die to self, what does that mean? You're separating yourself from the world, Romans 6.11. So you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. So if I could go around, I would tell everybody this.

Consider yourself dead to sin. All of you, consider yourself dead to sin. You might be going, Shane, amen, but I'm not.

I'm not dead to sin. That stuff is ready to rise up as soon as I walk out this building. I'm ready to eat too much and drink too much and watch too much.

This doesn't make any sense. The problem is that we don't feel dead to sin. And I came across an analogy this week from James McDonald.

I don't know if you heard him on the radio at all. A great preacher. Wonderful analogy that really brings this point home.

So when Paul says, consider yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ, Paul's saying this. You're dead to sin, you don't need to keep sinning. And we say, I'm dead to sin, thank God.

I believe the Bible, but what is going on in here? Because it's still alive in me. So here's what's happening. It means that because Christ died in our place, we are dead to the power of sin.

And I can say that with the authority of God's word. Sin has no more power over you at all. You're dead to it, unless you open the door.

And that's what he goes on to say. It's as if we used to live in an apartment with an awful landlord who would burst in whenever he wanted. But now we've moved to a new apartment with a new landlord, that being Jesus Christ.

We have new locks, we owe the former landlord nothing. He can't get into our new apartment unless we open the door and invite him in. So this is the dichotomy.

This is the interesting thing about sin. Just so you know, you are dead to the power of sin. You can say no and walk away.

And I'm tired of people telling me, I can't anymore. It's a disease, I'm bound. No, as a believer, you can say no and walk away.

That's the power of the gospel. Here's what's happening. You don't wanna walk away.

It has no power over me. It looks good, though. You have no power.

What? What was that? Okay, come closer. Right, come on, patty cake, remember? And here, that's why it's called enticement. So sin loses its power, but not its enticement or its influence.

So thank God I'm dead to sin. But boy, it's sure alive in me. That's why the more you get into God's word, and everything I talk about, prayer, brokenness, fasting, humility, all those things draw you away from the sin and closer to God.

So when Paul says be separate from the world to draw closer to Christ, and let me make a statement. If you only remember one thing tonight, I hope it's this. You are either dead to the world and alive to the things of God, or you're dead to the things of God and alive to the world.

What will be that person that thinks they can live in the middle? I just love the world, though, Shane, but yeah, I wanna go to church. No, you're loving the world. I'm gonna say that again.

You're either dead to the world and alive to the things of God, or dead to the things of God and alive to the world. Dead men see God, and the closer you draw to God and away from the world, the more you'll see him. These are the people who have one hour, two hour, three hour prayer time, and worship times.

They're on their face before God. They've had dreams or visions of Christ and seeing him on the cross, and they've been changed. They have this passion.

They have this overflowing. They weep over the things that God weeps. They're close to the Savior because they're dead to the world.

But those who are enjoying the things of the world and love the world and are filled with the world, they're dead to God. They might be going to heaven. I won't discount that, but they're quenching and grieving the spirit of God to such a degree that they've lost that relationship with the Lord.

It's not just the world, the world's mindset. When Paul says all that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, that word world is cosmos. It's not just the world.

It's the world's mindset, the way the world thinks. So if I'm thinking like the world, and I see so many, I coach baseball this year, and I'm so glad the season's over because I think we're going to be in last place. And talk about humility.

I said, Lord, I'm already humble enough, right? He goes, no, no, no, no, no. Because you go in there thinking you're going to do really good and then you're last place and everybody's ready to give up. So where I was going with that, obviously there's a lot of people that are involved that are Christians, but everything's about ESPN and the next big league, and the next player and travel ball.

Travel ball, wherever I just, they're gone on weekends to play baseball. What about church? Oh, travel ball is more important. Well, all you're teaching your kids that is more important than God.

And what happens is a lot of these people, it's all about their job, all about employment, all about baseball, all about sports, all about the latest. I go into the sporting goods store and buy \$300 baseball bat. I'm going to Big Five and finding one for \$29.99. And gloves are \$150 and you get the whole, and it's like, how do people buy this? I mean, but they're so inundated, yet they're Christians, but they don't know the power of God.

They've lost that. They've lost that because they've been drawn into the things of the world. So there's no nearness to God.

There's no mention of Him. And the same things, the carnality, the lust, and the bitterness, and the anger, and the resentment, and jockeying for a position and putting down people. And they look just like the world.

Why? Because they're not dead to God. I mean, they are dead to God. They're not dead to the things of the world.

So dead men see God has a second application. If you want to be close to God, you've got to die to those things. That means you're going to view different things.

You're going to read different things. You're going to hang around with different people. You're going to listen to different things.

You're going to conduct yourself differently because you're dead to the world to be drawn closer to God. That's a biblical principle. Seek me with all your heart, you will find me.

You think this person's seeking God with all their heart? No, they're trying to squeeze them in if it works on a Sunday morning. Experience God, die to self. The more I die to self, the closer God gets.

And I wish I could just preach a whole sermon on this because this is where many people, many people are not walking closely with God. Because there's not a half-hearted approach. And I want to clarify on this.

Nobody does it perfectly. You can't completely die to self and perfectly follow God. If you are that person, I would love to meet you.

But you can die trying. You can give up these things. Listen, I gave up a six-figure income and stock options and 401K and moved back in with my mother when I was 30.

So I know. And I'm not telling anybody to do that because God does things differently. But I tried to play that both ways for a while.

But God, I love this money. Can I just minister here? No. And the more I die to my own agenda, die to my own will, die to my own things, got rid of all the friendships pulling me down, all the negative, and just said, Lord, I want to follow you unconditionally, I drew closer to God.

And that's actually why I'm here today as a result of drawing closer to God. Dead men see God. You've got to die to the things of the world.

Why do you always think I talk about entertainment? Why? I know Christians right now, Christians right now on their voodoo, their Netflix, they've got such ungodly movies and they wonder why they're struggling with fear and depression, anxiety, and God seems distant. And they hate church and they can't read their Bible. Right, because you've got 50 shades of garbage on, you've got Deadpool on, you've got all these movies on, on, on all time, and you think you're pleasing God and God doesn't care.

No, sir, you are deceived. You're filled with the things of the world, not the things of God. That's how it works.

Dead men and women will see God if they're dead to the world and you've got to make different choices. You've got to structure your life in such a way that your lifestyle pleases God. I mean, think about how can we watch and listen to all this garbage and think that we're close to God? I mean, if the truth be told, the majority of people, the majority of Christians are not, are not close to God because the thief has come in.

The thief has come in to steal, kill, and destroy. He's stealing your joy. He's killing your relationship with God and that's his agenda.

So I just encourage you tonight, dead men see God and if you want, if you want to draw closer to God, don't, any of what I'm saying, take it to God and say, Lord, what do you want me to start removing? But be ready, be ready, because it's those things that are pulling us away. That's why I talk about fasting. People are like, oh, don't talk about that.

You know, they talked about that 100 years ago in every book and sermon I come across. The Bible talks about it often, but we don't like that, do we? Why? Because we don't want to, we love feeding ourselves,

but if you starve the flesh, get into the word of God and begin to kill the flesh, you'll draw closer to God. These are the people who just have the joy of, do you have, have you had the joy of the Lord in your life recently, where it just bubbles over and you're driving, just you feel God's presence.

You can't wait to put on worship. You can't wait to get a good book on and read it with a cup of tea or a good something on television or worship music and you're so hungry for the things of God. You can tell where you're at right now by telling me who you're hungry for.

Are you hungry to get home and feed the world or hungry to get home and feed the things of God? Dead men, dead women seek God, dead to the things of this world.

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