



Forest Baptist

Sep/Oct 07

Free



Gazing
into the
future



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www.morguefile.org

Forest Baptist
is published by

*Forest Baptist Church
The Welsh Church Hall
881 Leytonstone
High Road
Leytonstone
E11 1HR*

Come along and visit us and you'll find that our services are very straightforward: we sing, pray, read the Bible and someone will preach. The preaching is an important part of our services because we believe it matters that people should understand the Bible's message as clearly as possible. So the preacher will spend time explaining a part of the Bible and will aim to show that the teaching of the Bible is as relevant to us as it was for the people who first read it. You'd be welcome to join us on Sunday!

Further information about the church may be found on the back cover.

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In this edition...

"Does God have any long-term plans?" That was the title of a sermon given at Forest Baptist Church, one evening in August this year, and this edition of our small magazine contains a summary of the sermon. It looks at what God has said about the future for you and for me. And it also looks at how we should get ready for what is coming. But are you willing to think and prepare for what lies ahead? Don't leave it until it is too late! Now is the time. So read on...



MANY PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW THE FUTURE. What will happen to me tomorrow? Next week? Next month? Next year? Indeed, it seems that throughout history the future has always fascinated human beings. We find it hard simply to live life for the moment. There is always something we're worrying about for tomorrow.

As a result there have always been people around who have claimed to tell us the future, in order to meet this desire inside of us. Such people have existed for thousands of years and they still exist today. You can read them in the newspaper, ring them up on the telephone, watch them on the television, look them up on the Internet. Through one means or another – contact with the dead, examining the stars, laying out cards – they claim to discover things you couldn't know otherwise. But isn't it a fact that they are hardly ever correct and even when they are, it could just as easily be coincidence or a lucky guess?

However, unlike fortune-tellers, God can be trusted to know your future because he knows all things. So in this article I would like to tell you your future by telling you what the Bible says about it. What are God's long-term plans for you and me?

All will die

Let's start with three quotations from the Bible: “man is destined to die” (Hebrews 9:27); “dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19); “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Here is the Bible's first prediction about your future: you will die. I cannot tell you when it will happen. But, as you already knew before I told you, that is your future.

Lack of preparations

However, even though we all know this, so few of us prepare properly. Maybe we make a will to help those left behind. But we do not prepare ourselves for what lies beyond death. Of course, some would say they don't need to. They already know what lies beyond: whether it's paradise, reincarnation or nothing at all. So no preparations are needed, these people think. But the problem with these views is that there is no concrete proof that they are true. Why not? Because nobody comes back to tell us. Nobody comes back to confirm that death is the end, or that we are reincarnated as something / somebody else, or that we reach some paradise.

The truth about death

So we need somebody who has seen the other side of death, to tell us what is there. The Bible offers such a person: Jesus Christ. It says in a number of places that he clearly died but just as clearly rose from the dead. For example, here is Peter, one of Jesus' own disciples, speaking to the crowds in Jerusalem just a few weeks after Jesus had been tortured to death in that city. Acts chapter 2 verse 23, "Jesus was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." And there were many more besides Peter who saw Jesus alive again. Jesus Christ has seen death from the inside and come back to speak to us about it.

"We need somebody who has seen the other side of death, to tell us what is there"

All will meet God

So what does lie beyond death then? Let me give you three more Bible quotations: "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement." (Hebrews 9:27); "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." (Revelation chapter 20 verse 11); "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" (Matthew 25 verse 31). Here is the Bible's second prediction about your future: you're

going to meet God and he's going to talk to you about your life.

A serious conversation

However, we're not talking about a little discussion over a cup of coffee. This meeting with God will be an awesome moment for you. He wants to go through your life with you, in order to give his assessment of it; his judgement upon your life. He'll have reliable records – a complete biography of you written by the most reliable of sources. And based upon them, God is going to make a decision about you. As Jesus says, people will be sorted out, separated, on the day of God's judging the world.

Now when you meet God to discuss your life, then he will go through many things with you. But one of things he's going to be particularly interested in are your words. Listen to Jesus talking about that: "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." Are you ready to discuss your words with God? Are you ready to discuss all the times you've used God's name wrongly? All the times you've told ugly jokes? Been cruel to others or arrogant? Mocked others and put them down? Shouted in anger or hatred? All times you've spoken bitter words, lies, gossip, slander.? Are you ready to discuss all your broken promises to others?

"God is going to make a decision about you"

As you have judged...

But God will discuss even more than that. Listen to Jesus again, "in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." What does Jesus mean? He is saying that God listens to our words and then brings those words back upon us. We often judge others with our words: "How dare you do that!"; "Why

did you behave that way?"; "It's outrageous that she could do that."; "You're such an idiot" We judge other people with our words and pronounce over them, in our complaints and condemnations.

“Every time you utter one of those sentences, God is listening”

Well every time you utter one of those sentences, God is listening and puts the same measure against you. Have you complained that so-and-so was selfish? Well God will now test your selfishness. Have you moaned that that person didn't think of you when they made their plans? Well God will see if you have failed to think of others. Did you identify someone else as a liar, or as rude, or as mean, or as unapologetic or as lazy or as doing a bad job? Well God will compare you against your own words.

In all of these ways God is going to judge you after you have died. So how will you compare? Are you confident that God will look happily upon you? Don't be.

Many will be surprised

You see, the Bible says that many will be surprised by God's assessment of them and their words. Listen again to Jesus: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22)

Do you hear Jesus' warnings in those two verses? He is saying that many people are blind to their own standing before God. Some are so busy pointing out the faults of others, they don't notice their bigger faults. Some are so busy boasting of all they've achieved in life,

they don't notice how they've failed God completely. Inward-looking people, self-assured people, people proud and confident of their own goodness and their own readiness to face God, are going to be shocked when they meet him because his reaction won't be what they think they deserve.

All fall short

The problem is this: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The Bible says that God's glory is the ultimate standard by which will all be judged and every single one of us has failed to meet it. Some people may have failed in a bigger way than others. But all have failed to meet it. The great mistake which so many people make, is to overestimate themselves. They feel that God really ought to be fairly pleased with them. But that is to fail to see it from God's point of view and it is his point of view which matters.

Sent away

Don't go casually to meet with God because you may find yourself very surprised. You may hear those terrible words from Jesus "Away from me!" If you've chosen to do things your way, not God's way, then God will banish you. Since you didn't want God, you won't have God. But that will be no life because there is no real life apart from with God. So you will have chosen an eternal death.

“The great mistake which so many people make, is to overestimate themselves”

Christians will live forever

Is this what your future will be? I can't tell you that. It will be the future of many but your future doesn't need to be that. The Bible says that some will gain eternal life, not death. How? Here is how according to the Bible: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28); "Christ died for sins

once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” (1 Peter 3:18); “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25)

Jesus died for sin

As I explained earlier: Jesus died and Jesus rose again. But why did he die, only to rise again? Because he gave “his life as a ransom for many”. Other people deserved to die due to their sin, but Jesus came and died on their behalf. So every person who puts their trust or faith in Jesus Christ, has their sins taken away including all those rotten words and ways which are going to turn up in our conversation with God.

“Every person who puts their trust in Jesus Christ, has their sins taken away”

As the quotation said above, Christians are now justified people. The word justified means “not guilty” in the judgement of God. Through the death of Jesus Christ, Christians are people who can say that when they face God he will judge in favour of them. That isn't the same thing as saying Christians are good people – they aren't, Christians are just the same as everyone else. We have done what is displeasing to God and deserve to be banished by him. But God has made a way for sinners to be forgiven by

putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who through his death has dealt with sin. He took the death that Christians deserved, so that we could go free. So Christians can be sure of what the future holds for them. It holds eternal life, thanks to Jesus.

“Put your faith in Jesus Christ and your future can become certain”

What is your future?

But have you trusted Jesus Christ to save you in this way? If you haven't then you need to take action immediately. You need to go to Jesus Christ, in prayer, and ask him to forgive you and ask him to save you from disaster on judgement day. You will die and meet God. Keep trusting yourself and you'll receive a nasty surprise. But stop trusting yourself and trust in Jesus Christ and you'll be safe. You can be sure about judgement day. You'll pass safely through and live forever.

Many people wonder about the future. They read and they plan and they try to control their futures. They consult with mediums and astrologers. It's all a waste of time. But put your faith in Jesus Christ and your future can become certain – your eternal future. That's what every Christian knows about themselves and you can know it too.




This article is a summary of the final sermon in a series entitled “**God isn't what you think**” The sermon was preached at **Forest Baptist Church, Leytonstone**. Other sermons from the same short series are available as leaflets, on CD or on our website. For more information please use the contact details shown below.



Forest Baptist Church

Welsh Church Hall, 881 Leytonstone High Road,
Leytonstone, E11 1HR. (Near McDonalds)
☎ 020 0222 6801 🌐 www.forestbaptist.org.uk

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am ... If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.(NIV)



Are you under 12 and looking for something good to do? Then why not come along to our Friday club? It runs every Friday afternoon from 4.15pm, for around an hour.. Just get in touch with us for more details.



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Welsh Chapel
 881 Leytonstone High Road
 Leytonstone
 E11 1HR


Sunday Services:

10.30am and 5.00pm

Further information:

<http://www.forestbaptist.org.uk>

contact@www.forestbaptist.org.uk

 020 0222 6801

(Calls cost whatever you normally pay for London numbers)