

What Can We Learn From Memorial Day?

When we lived in the U.S. Midwest, Memorial Day weekend always seemed like the beginning of summer. For our family, it always included planting (or replanting) annual flowers. Flower bulbs and seeds are somewhat homely by themselves, but they hold hidden life and beauty within their uninteresting exterior.

They actually have two realities: One flourishes underground, while the other emerges above ground. We planted bulbs and seeds with a learned expectation that they would become beautiful flowers to enhance our yard and home.

Memorial Day was also an occasion to remember loved ones, friends, first responders or members of our military who had died. Often, bouquets of flowers were placed at their graves or places of memorial to remind everyone that we have two lives, living in two dimensions: physical and spiritual. As the apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians, “They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. Just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies” (1 Cor. 15:44, NLT).

Natural Bodies and Spiritual Bodies

We might think of death as a doorway of transformation from the physical realities to the spiritual realities to come. When we die, we are not annihilated. We do not pass into oblivion or nonexistence. Rather, our bodies and our spirit/soul have different destinies.

In this earth-based living, we have human bodies that were made to work in this physical reality. Likewise, when born-again believers in Christ die and shed these physical bodies (similar to the separation of a booster rocket on a missile), we retain the senses of our soul and spirit. First Corinthians

13:12 indicates we will be the same person, but an even better version—without the sin, sickness or sorrows of our present physical realities.

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Similarly, there are different kinds of physical flesh—one for humans, another for animals, another for birds and another for fish. There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory” (1 Cor. 15:39-41).

Sin Separates Us From Our Spiritual Destiny

Dr. Robert Jeffress explains sin as “thumbing our noses at God’s moral code, which is punishable by death.” Paul explained the consequences of sin as “wages,” which we earn. So many hours worked at an agreed rate of money or exchange accumulate to determine the wages we have earned and must be paid.

Paul taught the Romans: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a). This death is eternal separation from God and the eternal plans and rewards He has intended for us. It would be a horrible and eternal loss if it were not for the rest of that verse. It is critically important: “but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23b).

No longer is Paul speaking about “wages.” Rather, he highlights the alternative to eternal death as eternal life for those who are “in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” And, it is a free gift for all who will “repent” (Acts 17:30), turn away *from* their sins (1 Pet. 3:11) and turn *to* Jesus (Acts 26:18), making Him our Savior and Lord of our lives (Phil.

2:9-11).

We Must Be Born Again

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Since sin entered the world, we have been cut off from our intended spiritual connection with God, who is Spirit. Scripture says we are “dead” spiritually “because of your disobedience and many sins” (Eph. 2:1).

I’m told the owners of electric vehicles are constantly worrying about where they can get their next recharge. You can’t just walk to the next filling station and buy a can of electricity. When you run out of stored electricity, you will be dead in the water, so to speak.

Jesus assured a religious leader named Nicodemus: “No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life” (John 3:5-6).

By Jesus’ redeeming work on the cross and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, natural, sinful humans can be reconnected to Almighty God and, in effect, recharged from above by the spiritual rebirth of the Holy Spirit. We are not only given new power but a new destiny.

Born-again believers can exchange this hope-filled farewell: “I’ll see you again: here, there or in the air!”

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