

Surprise, Surprise!!

Jesus promised to go and prepared a place for His disciples, John 14.1ff. He also said there will come an hour when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth to be judged by God, John 5.28-29. The Apostle Paul said each one will appear before the judgment seat of God and be recompensed for what they have done, 2 Corinthians 5.10. The Hebrew writer says it is a terrifying thing to stand before God in judgment, Hebrews 10.31. Many other passages speak of the judgment of God on that Great Day. I imagine a number of people will be really surprised.

Those who thought they could predict when Christ would come were surprised. Over the years numerous religious groups have predicted the coming of Christ. William Miller identified, March 21, 1844 as the date of Jesus' return. Later he revised his date to October 22, 1844. I remember in 1975 the Jehovah Witnesses said Jesus was coming in April. In 1988 a man by the name of Edgar Whisenant wrote, "88 Reasons Why the Rapture will be in 1988." In the book, "Late Great Planet Earth" by Hal Lindsey it was predicted Christ would return in 1988. Obviously all of the just mentioned groups and people were wrong. We do know Jesus will return but when no one knows.

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." Mark 13

Those who deny the second coming and those unprepared will be surprised when it comes.

Carl Sagan spent his life teaching the theory of evolution. He discounted the idea of either the Universe or life was created by a divine being. He believed everything was created by time and chance as in Evolution. Obviously, a product of evolution will be a physical being, lacking a soul. I could see the surprise and horror on his face as he realized that his theology built upon evolution is totally wrong. As the Bible says, "The fool says in his heart, there

is no God" (Psalm 14.1). All those foolish enough to believe in evolution will be surprised.

Those who refused to go to church because of all the hypocrites will be surprised to find they will spend eternity with those hypocrites. Jesus spoke of hypocrites in various passages. In Matthew 23 He uses the word hypocrites seven times. No one wants to be a hypocrite or argue that a hypocrite can go to heaven. The fact is there have been and are hypocrites at various congregations. I have heard people say they will not go to that church because of the hypocrites. Unfortunately, they are not only condemning the hypocrites but also themselves. Anyone who will let others stop them from serving God will be lost and will spend eternity with them.

Those who believe being a good person would get them to heaven will be surprised. Tragically many believe if they do good things and stay away from anything "really bad" they can go to heaven. What they do not realize is that everybody has sinned against God, Romans 3.23. Being good cannot, will not pay for the bad we have done in our lives. Romans 6.23a say the wages of sin is death. Death is separation from God for eternity. The only way we have escape is through God's gift, Jesus Christ, Romans 6.23b. Therefore, everyone outside of Jesus will be condemned to hell for eternity, and many will be surprised.

Those who believe they would go to heaven because of their parent's faith will be surprised on that Great Day. Some reason because Mom and Dad are "card carrying" members of the Lord's Body they can slack off and still make it to heaven. However, the faith and righteousness of others is not imputed to you. "The soul who sins shall die, the son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18.20). God sees what you do and will judge you on that basis.

Finally, those who once were faithful members but quit will be sadly surprised. Obedience to God is a day by day activity. We can talk about what we used to do but what matters is what we are doing now. Many a preacher, elder, song

leader, Bible Class teacher, will be lost because they quit being those very things. The Hebrew writer warns us of coming up short of getting to heaven, Hebrews 1.2.

Let us live prepared for the reward of heaven and not make the mistake of others. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12.1.

–Dennis Tucker