

Suppose you were walking past my farm one day and saw me in the field crying. (I don't have a farm nor am I prone to sitting in fields, but go along with me.) There I sit, down and out at the head of a furrowed row. Concerned, you approach me and ask what is wrong. I look up from beneath my John Deere tractor hat and extend a palm full of seeds in your direction. My heart breaks for the seeds. "The seeds will be placed in the ground and covered with dirt. They will decay, and we will never see them again.

As I weep, you are stunned. You look for a turnip truck off which you are confident I tumbled. Finally, you explain to me a basic principle of farming: out of decay of the seed comes the birth of a plant. You put a finger in my face and kindly remind me: Do not be upset with the burial of the seed. Don't you know that you will soon witness a mighty miracle of God? Given time and care, this tiny kernel will break from its prison of soil and blossom into a plant beyond its dreams.

Well, maybe you aren't quite that dramatic, but those are your thoughts. Any farmer who grieves over the burial of a seed needs a reminder: A time of planting is not a time of grief. Any person who anguishes over the burial of a Christian body needs the same reminder. We will soon be planted in the ground. But out of death, God, for his children in Christ brings forth new life. So, when the seed of the body is placed in the soil, take heart, a brand new You is coming.

Financial cliff headed your way. Huge tax increases. 16 trillion in debt and climbing by the billions as I speak. The United States no longer a Christian nation. Marriage no longer between one man and one woman. The unborn slaughtered. A board of governors to determine if you will receive certain health care treatments. A Powerkeg in the Mideast with Israel ready to strike Iran. Storms like Sandy that bring massive destruction. A time of distress such as we have not witnessed since the beginning of time. Listen to the writer Daniel, "There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then." Before the return of Jesus Christ, we are told, that things will not be getting better, but actually worse. And Daniel's prophecy is being fulfilled Our world is becoming more and more scary every day.

In the days of Daniel there was also a battle taking place. It pitted the angels of God against Satan and his evil angels. Satan's troops wanted the Babylonian government to inflict as much pain as possible upon God's people. Satan wanted to make sure that God's people who were held captive in Babylon never returned to the land of Palestine. Satan wanted to make sure that the Savior Jesus Christ did not come into the world to redeem mankind. But Michael, the archangel, a 5 star general, was God's agent to overthrow those Satanic schemes and to guarantee that God's people would return to Palestine. Thus, good angels, invisible spirit beings, exist to protect God's people. As this world gets closer to the end, and things get worse for Christians, Michael will again intervene on behalf of God's people. God's angels are watching over you. Take heart, we have our back side covered.

But there is another item out there that attempts to take the luster out of our life. It is death. In every generation since Adam, the death rate has remained the same-one per person. But look at how our text gives a reason to shine again. It says, But at that time your people-everyone whose name is found written in the book-will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the

dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Your eternal destiny is dependent on whether your name is written in the book of life. Is my name written in that book? I want to assure everyone here today that it was. How do I know that? Well, the names written in that book are one's that look to Jesus as their Savior and Lord. It was the red ink of his blood of Calvary, that imprinted our name back into God's family book. Now that leads to a question. When we die, do both the body and soul go to sleep until Judgment day, or is it just the body?

The apostle Paul says in Philippians 1:21-23, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am going on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” The language here suggests an immediate departure of the soul after death. What Paul is saying here is that the moment he departs or dies, that very moment he is with the Christ. Another clue comes from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 5:8, Paul says, “We really want to be away from the body and be at home with the Lord.” Isn't this too the promise that Jesus gave the thief on the cross? He said to the thief, “Today will you be with me in paradise.” Translation. The soul of the believer journey's home, while the body of the believer awaits the resurrection when Jesus returns..

As Stephen was being martyred, he saw heaven open and the Son of Man standing at God's right hand. As he was near death he prayed, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. It is safe to assume that Jesus did exactly that. Though the body was dead, his spirit was alive. Though his body was buried, his spirit was in the presence of Jesus himself.

There are some today who insist that when the body is buried, the soul is also asleep. Many times sleep is used in the Bible to refer to death. But there is a problem. The Bible refers to some who have already died, and they are anything but asleep. Their bodies are sleeping but their souls are wide awake. In Revelation 6:9-11 refers to the souls of martyrs who cry out for justice on earth. Matthew 17:3 speaks of Moses and Elijah, who appeared alive on the Mt. Of Transfiguration with Jesus. Or what about the beggar Lazarus in heaven with Abraham. Meanwhile, a real rich man was suffering in hell. So, loved ones like Doug Hartshorn are alive right now. His soul is with Jesus. Rejoice. One day soon, when Jesus returns, his body will be resurrected and rejoin his soul in Heaven.

With what kind of body, when Jesus returns for Judgment day, will our body be like? There will be a big difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. Speaking of unbelievers the Bible says, “Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.” They shall be an abhorring means no one will want to be near them. Ugliness, shame, and pain will fill the bodies of the unbelievers. On Judgment day their bodies will be resurrected and reunited with their souls in hell. Shame and everlasting contempt. On earth they avoided a relationship with Christ. Now, they will hear God say: “Very well, you wanted to be without me; now be without me-forever!”

Many people feel that the God of the universe would never do anything like that. They

view God as loving but spineless. But the same God who, in the time of Noah threw oceans of water over the mountain tops, drowning a whole world of screaming people, the same God who scorched Sodom and Gomorrah in a hurricane of fire, the same God who fed queen Jezebel to the dogs, still reigns in heaven. And He has told us what he has done before He will do again. This should move us to reach out to our friends and family, to tell them of Jesus and how he has saved us from this horrific future. But for us, a much brighter future.

A New You is Coming. Our body will be changed. We will not receive a different body; we will receive a renewed body. A glorified body. Just as God can make an oak out of a kernal or a tulip out of a bulb, he makes a new body out of the old one. A body without corruption. A body without weakness. A body without dishonor. A body like the body of Christ after he rose from the dead. What a future!

In the meantime, did you realize you members of Open Bible are the wisest people in the universe? Everyone here may not have a PHD , or be a retired CEO of a large company. You are wise in that you know you are a sinner, and Christ is your only Savior from sin. As a result we shine. And it is important that you and I continue to shine. That means others should be able to see that we are Christians. That we really care and are ready to help others in need. To go the extra mile.

The story is told of a pastor who got on board a city bus and was given 50 cents more change back than he should have received from the driver. As he sat on the bus he thought, "I should really give this money back to the driver, he gave me too much back. But then again, the city is always taxing us for every little thing, this is my special gift. When the pastor left the bus, he gave the driver the 50 cents, telling him he gave him too much back. The bus driver said, "I knew you were the pastor of Open Bible, I was just seeing if you practiced what you preached. I was testing you. I am looking for a church. I'll see you this Sunday. Are we shining and making a difference? Do other's see Jesus in us? That's what will lead them to Open Bible and to know Jesus.

My friends, we have a chance as Daniel says to lead many to righteousness. Last Monday night Dennis Duessler asked me to visit his friend Herb at the Villages Hospital. I visited with Herb, and left him some Bible passages. He told me Dennis was praying for him. I told him now I would be. Later that night I talked to Walt Farnsworth who was in the hospital on the same floor. I asked Walt to stop by and encourage Herb. Herb must have thought, man those people of Open Bible are after me. We are. We don't want Herb to face everlasting shame and contempt. So shine Open Bible members. Shine. The time is now to lead many to righteousness. Amen..