

Good morning everybody. How're we doing? Is it just me, or does it seem like it's an hour earlier? (Laughing) No. It's okay. It's just me, right? It's nice to be here always. I'm so thankful that your Pastor's on the uptick and doing better. I tell you there's not a better guy out there than Jack Abeelen. You guys know that, right? (Applause) There really isn't. I go everywhere. Every Sunday morning different church - around the country, out of the country, this and that. And I tell you - your guy, he's the tops. I've been so thankful for him. I've known him for, I think it's 35 years now we've known each other, something like that, and it's just been a blessing. So I'm excited he's going to be back soon. He actually called us on the radio on Thursday and talked for a few minutes. He sounded pretty good, and so we're praying, and I know you're praying all the time for him. Right? Yeah. And keep it up because he's a treasure, and you guys are blessed. And you're a treasure to him, too. So, anyway, it's nice to be here.

This morning what I'd like to do is a summary. I did a series of books on the afterlife - five books on it - and I want to summarize, in 30 minutes, 1400 pages. Okay? (Laughing) I know I talk fast, but I'm not going to get it all done. Trust me. I'm not going to do it. But I think what it's going to do, it's going to help you when people ask you in the future - because the outline is very, very simple to follow - to tell people about what they're facing, not only in this life but in the next life. So hopefully this'll be a blessing to you.

So if you have your Bibles, would you turn with me to the twelfth chapter of the gospel of Luke, Luke 12:16, and we're going to read the parable of Jesus of the rich fool. (As you're getting there, one thing you learn as a public speaker - they told you never apologize, and I never listen to what people say. I've had this thing in the chest that a lot of you people have had. Has anybody had this thing? Okay, good. Two months. I'm on the end of it, but it's not been fun. And so, if I have to cough once or twice, please forgive me. I ask forgiveness ahead of time, but hopefully it won't happen).

All right. Luke 12:16, "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I

will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' " But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.' "

All right. Each human being that has ever lived on the face of the earth is going to keep four appointments. Four appointments we all have. We have no choice. We have appointments today we can choose to keep or not to keep. But there're four appointments every human being's going to keep, and we need to know about them. We need to understand what they are and what they mean.

Now the first one we're all keeping right now. We're living in the light of eternity. We are all alive, and that is appointment number one. Now, we often get calls on the radio program. Someone says, "I didn't ask to be born." All right. Probably none of us did, right? I don't remember any of us asking that. But we're here, and because we're here, we are held responsible to God because we are living in the light of eternity; meaning after this life, there is something else - something that follows. And so you and I now are on a road, but the road has an ending to it, and it's called eternity. It's almost like you're running a race, and there's a banner that's out at the distance at the finish line, and it says "Eternity" on it. We're all on that road. We're all in that race, as it were. We're all going towards that. The problem is none of us knows how close we are to the finish line, do we? I mean, it could be way out there, or it could be right in front of our eyes. None of us literally knows. So we're living in the light of eternity. And in doing so, we're preparing for the next life. All of us are.

So the question is - where do we get the answers? Where do we know what's going to happen to us when we die, when we go? Now, you've got all kinds of people giving answers. You've got what's called near-death experiences. People die, or they say they die, or they're sort of dead (mostly dead) (Laughing) - anyway - some of you got that one - and then they come back, and they tell us what it's like on the other side. They have an experience. Most of them go to heaven. They give that to themselves. Some of them talk about a darkness. But then they tell us things about what it's like on the other side - the white light, this and that. The problem with that is the Bible speaks against that; 2 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul had one of these near-death experiences, as it were. He was caught up to the presence of the Lord in the third heaven. And when that happened he said he

heard things that would be a crime, unlawful for anyone to try to explain. So it's interesting. Never, ever did he ever write about it, except this one time in 2 Corinthians. None of his sermons did he ever mention his personal experience. Ever. It was only what Jesus did, and what He did on our behalf is why we're going to live in the next life. And so his view of eternity and that is based on what Jesus did on our behalf on the cross, dying for the sins of the world, coming back from the dead, ascending into heaven, and what He's revealed to us. Not a personal testimony. And so we have to go to God's Word and God's Word alone. And basically it tells us this - that, yeah, we're beings made for eternity. This life isn't all there is. And what we do now will determine, like Billy Graham used to say, "Where you'll be 100 years from now" because this life is the preparation for eternity. And so, as we're living in the light of eternity, the answers to what happens after we die - in the future - come from one place and one place alone, and that's the Bible. It's not from someone's personal experience, it's not from someone's testimony, it's not from someone's vision. It's from what God's Word says. And this is what's important to understand: God's Word is sufficient. It tells us everything we need to know about the afterlife; maybe not everything we want to know but everything we need to know. It's complete. It is sufficient to us. We don't need anybody else telling us what's going to go on in the next life because of their own personal testimony. The Lord has sufficiently told us in Scripture.

And so all of us now are living in light of eternity. But that's right now. Someday, unless we're that one generation that's caught up to meet the Lord in the air with the rapture and the translation of the church, we're going to die. Which leads us to the second appointment we're all going to have - and that is death.

You know, it's coming around near tax time, and they say, "as sure as death and taxes." That's kind of a proverbial saying. Well, it's true. Death is something that every human being faces because the moment we're born (and this is freaky to think about), we begin to die. Because there's a shelf life for all of us. Let's put it that way. Right? We're not going to be made to live forever. Most of us discover that, that the body doesn't quite function as well as it used to. I notice the words on the page get smaller every year. I don't know why that is. But, you know, everything seems to (Laughing) - and certain things you used to be able to do don't function as well, but that's part of it. So, someday, we are all going to die. And the Bible says when that happens, we go - and this is believer and unbeliever both - to an in-between or an intermediate state. And that's appointment number two. All of us are destined to go to this in-between or intermediate state. Now what does

that mean? It means there's something that comes before and something that goes after. If you're in-between, there's something that preceded it and something that comes afterwards. The Bible talks about this state, this in-between state. It tells us basically what happens one second after we die.

If we are a believer - here's the really good news - we're immediately in the presence of the Lord. In fact, there are five different passages in Scripture that teach for a believer, the second he or she dies, they're in God's presence.

We have a story that Jesus gave in Luke 16. Remember the two people - the rich man and the poor man, Lazarus? The rich man had it all going for him. The poor man, Lazarus, sat out at his gate, he was covered with sores, he was a beggar. They both die. The rich man goes to a place of punishment. Now he was conscious, too, and so was Lazarus. And this is very important to understand. Lazarus now, it says, angels brought him into the bosom of Abraham (which is synonymous with heaven, the place where God is). All right. And he was comforted. Now what does that tell us? If you're comforted, that means you're awake, you're conscious, you're alive. So that tells us right there. In the next world, when someone dies, they're in God's presence being comforted. So Jesus shared that (on the other side of the cross) what happens to people when they die, and He was talking about riches don't get you there.

Anyway, not only He said that, in the same gospel of Luke, the very famous story of the man that was crucified next to Him that believed in Him. He had two criminals, and one said the very famous (in Luke 23:42), "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And remember Jesus' great statement? "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). "Today, you're going to be with Me in Paradise." From that passage we referred to earlier, 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paradise is synonymous with the presence of God or heaven. Paul says, "I was caught up into the third heaven," which is the presence of God. Then he says, "I was caught up into Paradise." So they're the same place. So Jesus promised this criminal that died next to Him that immediately he would be in the presence of the Lord in heaven. So, we have a second time in Scripture that tells us when someone dies, they're going to be immediately in God's presence, conscious.

Now we have a third illustration of that in the book of Acts. In the seventh chapter, the first martyr of the Christian church was a man named Stephen. In Acts 7:59 it tell us as he's dying, he's being stoned to death, he looks up, and he

sees the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father and welcoming him into God's presence. Now, Stephen was ushered in immediately into the presence of the Lord as the Lord welcomed him. Now, He didn't welcome him to sleep for two thousand years. He welcomed him to be consciously in His presence. So we have another indication in Scripture of someone who's about to die, is going to be immediately ushered into the presence of the Lord.

Now there's a fourth one, and there're two (actually in the writings of Paul to the various churches) that indicate the same thing. He's writing to the church at Corinth, and he says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). Now, he said, "I'd rather be that." Isn't it nice it says we're going to be at home with the Lord because heaven is our home, and home is where we belong? And so someday, when we're absent from this body, we are going to be at home with the Lord, at home in His presence; and appointment number two, at the in-between state. And, finally, to the Philippians 1:21, he went on to say, "For to me, to live is Christ," but then he said this, "and to die is gain." "Die is gaining," Paul said, "because if I died, I would be with Christ." Philippians 1:21-23. "I'm ready to weigh anchor, I'm ready to die." He used the analogy there to cast off like a ship does (go out to sea), and he's talking about his own body. But he says, "When I die I would be with Christ which," he said, "is far better." To be living would be for Christ's sake and to help the Philippians, but to die, for him, would be far better.

So, bottom line is this. The good news for believers - the moment you and I, if we pass off from this life (and, again, unless the Lord comes back, we will), we're going to be immediately in His presence; conscious, we're going to be there in His wonderful, wonderful presence. Isn't that a great thought, to know that? And so that is one of the reasons the early Christians - they couldn't really do anything to them; the Romans, when they put them to death in the Coliseums and that. "Okay, fine. We're going to be in the Lord's presence." And they didn't know how to deal with that because "to die is gain," as Paul said. So, anyway, that is what Scripture teaches.

Now, on the other hand, it also teaches that unbelievers, when they die, are conscious, too, in the next world. Luke 16, that same story, verse 19 and following, the rich man - it's a sad story. He was conscious, he knew where he was, he knew who he was, he knew who Lazarus was (he used to be at his gate), he knew who

Abraham was, he knew he had five brothers, he knew why he was there, and he knew (he found out) that he couldn't escape - which was a horrific thing.

So, upon death everyone's going to wake up somewhere - appointment number two. It's not going to be nothing. It's going to be either with the Lord or without Him and His presence. So that is an appointment, again, that every human being will experience in their life.

Now, one of the questions we often get asked - in fact, when I first started doing regular radio, I was wondering what question would people ask the most, and it's basically this one, "What's going to happen one second after we die?" And we know we're going to be in the presence of the Lord, but then they want to know more. "Okay. I'm going to be in God's presence, but what kind of body am I going to have? What form will I be in?" And what's fascinating - the Bible really isn't that concerned about what kind of form we'll be in. It's more concerned about our eternal destiny and the glorified body we'll get someday. And so it says a few things but not really that much. So Christians have, basically, three different ideas they argue.

Number one is that the moment you die, you'll get some type of temporary body in the afterlife. You'll be in the presence of the Lord and some type of temporary body - not the body you have here but not the body you're going to get. And some people argue that. Others say no, no, no. This is eternal realm, there's no set time, there's no need to wait. The moment we die, we're in God's presence, and we've been given that body that's been promised to us. Again, that is what some people hold (and some good people hold that). The problem is Philippians 3 talks about when the Lord returns - at that time He will transform these mortal bodies into a body like that of His Son. So, it seems that's not going to happen till the Lord returns. Probably the best answer (and, again, we don't know because it's not that clear in Scripture) is that we'll be spirit beings. It'll be us, the real us. We'll be conscious. We will be in His presence in some sense but without a physical form. Now someone says, "Wait a minute! How can that be? How can you function anywhere without a physical form?" May I remind you - Hebrews 1:7 and 14 says angels don't have any physical form. They're spirit beings, and they do really well in the next world, thank you. God has no body. God is a Spirit, and He functions in that realm. So somehow, unbeknownst to us, it seems (and, again, we don't know that for a fact) that when we enter into the presence of the Lord, there won't be any necessarily physical form. We'll be a spirit, we'll be conscious, it'll be us.

Because of the in-between state, we're still waiting for what is promised down the line. You know something? Here's the bottom line - we won't care because we're in God's presence, right? So we're going to be happy, we're going to be in a state of bliss, so it really doesn't matter in one sense. But bottom line is this - the next state after this death, one second after we die, we're going to wake up either in the presence of the Lord or apart from His presence. And, again, there's no third choice there. That is the in-between state.

All right. By definition, in-between means something comes before, and something comes after. And the third thing that comes after, the third appointment that every human being must have, is the resurrection from the dead. Someday, every human being who has ever died will be raised from the dead. Scripture talks about it. Jesus, in John 5:29, says there'll come a day when the dead will rise, both the righteous and the unrighteous. Scripture, again, talks about this in great detail - that there will be a resurrection of everybody someday.

Now, for the resurrection of the believers, we will be given at that time a new body, a glorified body, a permanent body, the one like the Lord Jesus had after His resurrection from the dead. So if you want to know what you're going to be like someday - what your body's going to be like - all you have to do is look at the body of Jesus, the properties it had after He came back from the dead, and see what it's able to do. One of the amazing things is that we find, on Easter Sunday (if you remember Luke 24), He's walking with these two people on the road to a city called Emmaus. And, again, the Bible says their eyes were supernaturally held back so they couldn't recognize Him. So they're walking with Jesus; they don't know it's Jesus. He'd already risen from the dead that day. These are two disciples - not the eleven (Judas is gone now), but two others - kind of the other group, the B Team, as it were, because there were more than just the eleven there. They're all gathered together, and they're walking to Emmaus, and Jesus joins them. And they don't know it's Him. They were kept from recognizing Him. And they started to tell Jesus about what had happened because Jesus, "What's going on here? What are you talking about?" And anyway, as the conversation was going, they got to a place called Emmaus, and Jesus was explaining to them the necessity of the Messiah dying. In other words, "You should have known. If you would have read the Scriptures, you would have expected this to happen." And then He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Anyway, they get to this place called Emmaus, this city, and they go to break the bread, and all of a sudden they recognize Jesus. But here's the key for what we're talking about

today - the Bible says the moment they recognized Him, He disappeared. In other words, His body (after He'd come back from the dead) moved from this dimension to the next. He just disappeared. He literally became a phantom, the Greek says. So anyway, these two fellows were so excited they ran back to Jerusalem, to the disciples who were meeting in the upper room. The doors were all locked, and they explained what they had seen with Jesus on the road to Emmaus; and then in the city of Emmaus how He talked to them, how He related to them, but how He disappeared. And then the disciples said, "Well, yeah, He appeared to Simon Peter also." So they're talking about that, and at that moment the Bible says Jesus appeared in that locked room. He appeared in that locked room to them. So, in this case, He moves from the unseen dimension to our visible dimension. So, in that one short period of time - a few hours - He moved both ways: from this dimension (talked with these two people in Emmaus) to the invisible dimension. Then He comes back. And this is what His body could do. But the good news is He had a real body. They thought they'd seen a ghost. "No, no. I'm not a ghost. Handle Me. Touch Me and see. A ghost doesn't have flesh and bones that you see Me have." Then He asked for something to eat. So this is one thing we learn. In eternity, we'll be able to eat, guys. That's good. Right? So guys always like that, when you mention that. And so bottom line is He had a body, but it was a different body; it had different properties, a resurrected body, a glorified body. That's the body you and I are going to get someday if we have trusted Christ as our Savior.

Now someone says, "Wait a minute now. How is that going to happen here when He raises the dead?" Because let's face it, there are people who have been cremated, there are people who have been..... I love this illustration..... "What happens if you're out in the ocean, and you fall overboard, your body, and a shark comes and eats you, and then someone catches the shark and eats the shark? Where are you? How's God going to do all that?" (Laughing) All right. Here's the simple answer. Jeremiah 32:27, the LORD says, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" What's the answer to that? No. No. If God can speak, and the universe can appear - something can come out of nothing, He's certainly capable of putting Humpty Dumpty back together again. Right? Wherever our parts are, wherever we're at. The best answer I ever heard of this - and this is ten years ago, now - I was doing a talk on the rapture of the church at Calvary Chapel Ramona, and I said, "We don't know what's going to happen. He's going to put us back together again." This young guy comes up to me - very clever. He said, "I've got a question for you. Doesn't it say somewhere in Scripture that the Lord collects all our tears in a bottle?" I said, "Yes, it does." He says, "Well, if



He's got our tears, then He's got our DNA. Right?" (Laughing) I said, "Yeah, I guess." Well, I wish I would have thought of that. It makes sense. Anyway, He'll be able to do it some way. The Lord's collected everything there. He'll put us back together again. Nothing is too difficult for Him. So the dead in Christ will be raised first, the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 4; at the rapture of the church, the dead in Christ rise first. And what happens is the body that's in the grave (or wherever it is) meets the spirit that's in the presence of the Lord, they receive this resurrected body. Those who are alive at that time will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and they will receive the same type of body - a glorified, perfect body - as those who had died. It will not be a resurrected body (because they didn't die), but it's the same body, as it were. So that's our future someday. That's appointment number three - the resurrection of the dead. If we're dead at that time, the body and spirit will join. If we're alive, we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, we'll be given that new body. But the dead will be raised.

Now it's interesting. Unbelievers will be raised too but something like in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It's a fascinating truth in Scripture. Anyone in the next world who is not a believer, there's never once a personal name attached to them. He was just the "rich man." We're told the dead will be raised. We're not told what form they'll have, the unbelieving dead. They'll just be raised. And so they do exist. It's not as though they never existed, but their identity, as far as the Bible is concerned, is not given to us. It's kind of fascinating.

All right. So, we've had three appointments. We're living number one, right? In the light of eternity. Number two - death. One second after we die, in-between. Number three - the resurrection from the dead. But then number four - resurrection always leads to judgment. So that's the fourth appointment everyone has. Every human being who has ever been born will be judged. Now, we have to again recognize the fact that the word "judgment" in Greek (as in English) has a couple different connotations, depending on the context. Judgment can be (as far as the Christians are concerned judgment is) reward day or evaluation day. When the Christian is judged, when you and I are taken before God and judged, our works, our life is evaluated. What we've done after we've come to faith in Christ will be evaluated by Him, and we will receive a reward. Depending on how faithful or unfaithful we've been would be the extent of the reward in the next life. But our lives will be evaluated. It's sort of like the Olympic Games. In fact, the same word was used. The "**bema**," the judgment seat is a raised platform, and they had this in the Olympic Games in Paul's time. When the competitors would finish the

race, they would come before the judge, and they would get certain rewards. Sort of like today - gold, silver, bronze medals. Well, the same thing's going to happen to all of us. We're going to be rewarded by the Lord depending on how faithful we've been. Now, again, there's nothing wrong to receive rewards. I have a whole talk on that. In fact, you guys were the first church I ever gave it to - at the men's group a couple of years ago when you had your quarterly meeting, and I put my ten points together on what criteria is God going to use to judge or determine our rewards. Kind of like God's report card - what's He going to grade us on? Anyway, the idea is He's going to grade us on certain things - how we live in this life, what we've done - and we're going to be graded and rewarded. And you want to receive a reward because that's going to show how faithful you've been to the Lord in this life. But all of us are going to be judged and evaluated someday. That is the future for every believer. And we're going to then be in His presence in this glorified body, rewarded based upon how faithful we've been to Him after we've come to Christ. Now, that is for the believers.

There is also another judgment, and this is used in the way that the word is often used; and that is synonymous with punishment. Unbelievers will be punished. Believers will be rewarded. There is no third place, there is no Option C. It's Option A or Option B. That's just it - one place or the other. And unbelievers will be punished for all eternity. They will be judged, and then they will be punished.

Now, those are the four appointments we all have. We're living, in-between, raised from the dead and then judged. However, that will lead to two different destinations - heaven for the believers, hell for the unbelievers. This is what the Scriptures teach. This is the ultimate destination for every human being who has ever lived. And that's the end. Once you're there, you're there one place or the other. And so the bottom line is - in this life, we determine where we're going to spend for all eternity. I have a talk I give on the first five verses of Revelation 21, where it talks about the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. And whenever I read those verses, it's almost like I don't even want to say another word. I feel like saying, "Let's just close our Bibles and dismiss" because it's got the most wonderful truth of what your future is going to be like and my future's going to be like. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, comes down to this planet, comes down to earth, and the new heaven and the new earth, and we're going to reside there. It says, "God is going to be our God. We're are going to be His people. He is going to live and dwell amongst us." It is the land of fadeless day. The gates are always open. In other words, we can go in and out at all times. There's no night, no need

for sun or moon, any of that. And we'll be there with Him forever and ever. That's what's positive there.

But here's what's negative there. No more crying, no more tears, no more pain, no more suffering. Then in Revelation 21:5, He says, "Behold, I'm going to make all things new." Isn't that wonderful? Everything will be made new. New body, new world, new universe, new everything. That is the hope, the destiny of those of us who have trusted Christ. It's a wonderful destiny.

You know, oftentimes in this world we hear things that are too good to be true. If someone's going to tell you this, "Now, I'm going to tell you this. It sounds too good to be true," and it probably isn't true when they usually say this. We read Revelation 21. It is true. It's our future, our destiny. We're going to be in His presence forever and ever and ever. So, Christian, you have a fabulous future for you. Think about it. Death brings you into His presence, a blissful presence. Someday raised from the dead, judged, evaluated, then given rewards, then eventually heaven forever and ever in the presence of the living God.

But here's the question. All right. Number one - if you would go today, die today, where would you be? Would you be with the Lord or without Him? That's the first thing to determine. Are you saved, or are you unsaved? If you don't know you're going to heaven when you die, today is the day to settle that. And so you can know that before you leave this room. Number two - if you're a Christian, how's the reward day going to be for you? How is the evaluation going to go? In other words, when God gives His report card, how are you going to fare in that? Have you spent your time living for Christ, or have you kind of wasted your life and not really done a lot of things that will earn rewards or earn His favor? And I think if we're honest with ourselves, we probably all have areas that we can do better in. Some of us can do a lot better in. But today would be a great day to start because one thing we want to do - when we get in His presence, we want to hear the words of Matthew 25:21 and 23, when the Lord says - gives His parable, when this person's in the presence of the Lord, the Lord says to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I hope all of us want to hear that. I hope all of us will hear that in the next life - after we've gone to meet the Lord. But we're going to go to meet Him. We're going to be evaluated. Again, these are four appointments none of us can miss. We can't miss it. So the question today is - are you looking forward to those appointments? Are you looking forward to the time you'll see Him face to face? And if so, then you're ready to meet Him right now. Because, again, like we

said, who knows when it'll be when it's our time? We're living in the light of eternity. We must take each day as it comes. It was John Wesley that once told a group of pastors, he said, "Preach every sermon as though it will be your last, and one day you'll be right." All right? (Laughing) I think it was Luther that said, "Live each day as though it will be your last." And so we want to live each day in the fullness for the presence of the Lord because someday we will be with Him face to face.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for the power of Your Word. Thank You for the teaching that's there, the hope that we have that this life is not all that there is. We are not here by accident. We are not here by chance. We are here by design. And You have provided us an eternity, an identity, a purpose, a destiny in this life and beyond based on what Jesus has done. So I pray for each of us in here today as we think about our future, we think about living in the light of eternity, preparing for the afterlife, that we will understand what a glorious future we have because of what Christ has done on our behalf. And, Lord, we thank You for that honor, we thank You for that privilege, we thank You for what Jesus has done for us. And, Lord, we want to honor You because we know Your Word says You will honor those that honor You. So help us in this life to honor You so when it comes time for evaluation day, we will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Again, I thank You so much for this church. Thank You for Pastor Jack. Continue to heal him, bless him, and bless everything going on here. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. God bless you folks.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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