

ULTIMATE TRUTHS

A publication of Dunamanagh Baptist Church

 **Dunamanagh
Baptist
Church**

Only a Heart-Beat

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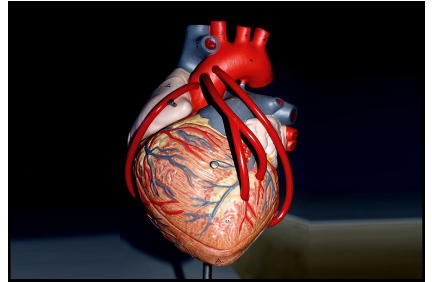
Have you ever wondered what makes your heart beat?

It beats on average 60-100 times per minute. That's 3,600-6,000 times an hour and 86,400-144,000 times per day. In a 70-year lifetime the average human heart beats more than 2.5 billion times - yet we never give it a second thought!

So, how does the heart keep beating? Believe it or not electricity keeps it beating! We have a natural pacemaker [called the sinoatrial node] which is made up of special cells that create an electrical impulse, making the heart muscle contract and pump blood.

Sometimes, especially later in life, like any organ in the body, things can go wrong but due to advances in medicine over the years, a lot of heart conditions can be fixed. I have worked in a cardiology [heart] ward for over 20 years and I have been amazed at how many different ways your heart functions and how each different area of your heart has a job to do. It's also amazing when things go wrong with your heart, the procedures that can be carried out to cure a problem or sometimes it may be simply a case of taking tablets.

But what happens when your heart beats for the final time? When all



attempts by medicine have failed. What happens then? What are you trusting in then?

I'm trusting in Jesus. As a child of 9 I claimed the promise of Acts 2:21 – ***"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved"***.

I realised I was born in sin and the only way I would be in heaven one day was to ask for His forgiveness. Now, like the hymn writer says, "In Christ alone my hope is found" and throughout the ups and downs of everyday life I depend on Him. I know when my heart beats for the final time I will be with God in heaven, as He promises in John 14:2:

"In My Father's House are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you."

Like the following words of a hymn I just want to ask you – "There's only a heartbeat between heaven and hell, O tell me my friend, with your soul is it well, is it well?"

Celebrity Connection.

Do you have an autograph of a famous person? Or an object connected with a celebrity?

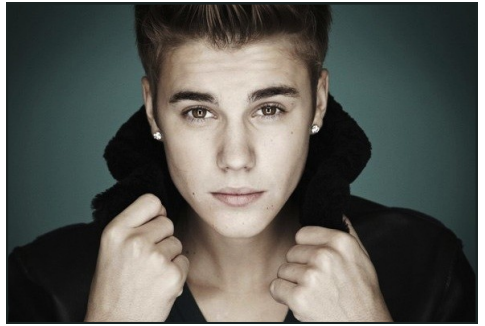


There are some fans out there who pay lots of money to own something that once belonged to their idols – for example, a handkerchief used by actress Scarlett Johansson sold on eBay for a whopping \$5,300,



Recently a lock of pop singer Justin Bieber's hair was ,

auctioned for an unbelievable \$40,668.



There is something about owning "a piece of" a celebrity, that attracts a lot of interest - a belief that in owning the object, we own or experience something of that person's "aura."

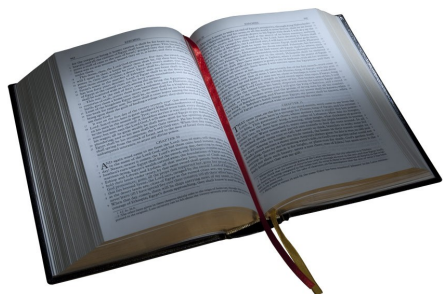
The same is true of religion. Some people, pay big money for religious relics. For example: on eBay there is currently for sale, a piece of "the true cross" on which Christ was crucified, and it could be yours for a mere \$1800!



Celebrity Connection.

Owning a piece of the cross won't bring you any closer to Christ. In fact, you could own the entire cross on which Jesus died, and this still wouldn't bring you any closer to God.

You might be reading this and say; "well this doesn't apply to me! I would never spend that kind of money!" Maybe not, but how many times do we fall into thinking that simply having a Bible in the house, or going to Church, is enough to bring us closer to God, or to get us into heaven? It's not that different, is it?



Jesus says in John 14:6

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

This means, that there is nothing we can do to get closer to God, than to come to Jesus.

No amount of Church attendance or "good deeds," can do what Jesus did for us. He died on the cross, to take away the price we'd have to pay for our sins. Jesus' love for us far outweighs the "love" people have for celebrities, that makes them pay more than the average salary, for a lock of somebody's hair. Jesus didn't pay with money for us, because that would mean nothing. Jesus could have produced money from thin air. Instead, he died for our sins, and took the punishment we deserve.

We should take comfort in this, then, because the result of all this, is that salvation through Jesus, is available to all of us, equally. This is why it says in John 3:16 that,

"whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The Mother of all Infections.

Almost every news bulletin we listen to gives an update on the spread and impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Many are deeply concerned about how quickly it is moving around the globe despite our best efforts to halt its advance. It is clear this virus is very infectious with some experts estimating that, left unchecked, up to 80% of the population could catch it over the course of the outbreak.

Folk also worry about its possible effects especially on the old and those with underlying health problems particularly a compromised immune system. That said, we have been assured, for around 80% of those infected, the symptoms should be mild to moderate. Nevertheless, if too many people come down with the 'bug' at the same time, the government will experience a lot of difficulty maintaining public services. What's more 14% of those infected may require hospital treatment before making a full recovery. Another 5% could need intensive hospitalised care. Regrettably, it appears, there is an overall fatality rate of around 1%.

As we have never encountered this strain of the Coronavirus before doctors and scientists are working around the clock to come up with a vaccine and other treatments that will 'cure' it. Best estimates suggest it could be at least a year to eighteen months before one becomes available. Inside this time numerous governments will willingly pay out many, many millions of pounds on research in an attempt to avert the tragic loss of life and protect the world's economy from even greater damage.

In the meantime, our finest endeavours are concentrated around minimising physical contact, washing our hands thoroughly and often, frequently cleaning commonly touched surfaces and quarantining those who are infected or suspected of being infected. Furthermore, clear guidance has been issued to help us recognise the symptoms - a cough, a high temperature and shortness of breath - so that appropriate action can be taken ASAP. The government, guided by the finest medical minds, is regularly reviewing this advice and will amend it as and when it sees appropriate. Many public services, other amenities and businesses will be 'locked down' if levels of infection continue to increase. That said experts tell us, if we follow their guidelines, we can have confidence the situation should be kept under control. Despite these assurances the BBC reports that supermarket shelves have been stripped of soap, hand sanitisers, toilet rolls, pasta and rice. It appears many people are seeking further reassurance from their own efforts.

It strikes me as curious that so many of us will rightly go to such great lengths to ward off what for the majority will be a moderate illness yet neglect addressing an even more common and deadlier infection that has been around since time immemorial.

The Bible teaches us that in the heart of every person lurks the deadliest disease of all - sin. And we are all born with it. The infection rate is therefore guaranteed to be 100%. Romans 3:23 tells us, **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** Unlike COVID-19 this is not a new infection. It has been afflicting humans since Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden and it has been passed from generation to generation. It's not that we are all desperately wicked people through and through for everyone is capable of doing good. Rather it's the fact that no matter how hard we try to be good we know we often fall short. Mind you there are also times when we know doing, saying or thinking certain things is wrong and we just go ahead and do them anyway because we don't want God to tell us how to conduct our lives.

We want to be our own boss! Often, our consciences let us know we are wrong but we hide the guilt and continue to sin.

Allied to the universal nature of sin is its guaranteed effects. Not only do all suffer from it but it is deadly in every instance. Romans 5:12 makes this clear, ***“Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”*** The terrible truth is that our sin makes us unfit to enter into God’s holy presence – we are spiritually dead. In Adam’s case he and Eve were put out of the Garden of Eden and had to come to terms with the prospect of physical decay and death. In our case we are barred from heaven and live with the everyday reality of physical decay and death. What’s more, no amount of medical expertise or technological sophistication can prevent the spread of sin or produce a vaccine cure. No matter how hard people try they can never restore their spiritual health. Many have tried. Some folk have become devoutly religious in the hope of pleasing God by their own efforts. Others have pronounced God never existed or is dead so the matter of sin is no longer relevant. Some just get on with life, do their best and hope that, if there is a God, He will overlook their wrongdoing and concentrate on rewarding their acts of kindness. All of these attempts at a solution never really convince us that we have found the answer to our sin problem and so we all live with the fear of what comes after death. Just like those who are panic buying soap today we are insecure about the future.

Within our own lives the symptoms of sin are so clearly recognisable. Selfishness comes so easily to us. Saying things we know are untrue and deceiving others is second nature. Thinking thoughts that we could never share with our nearest and dearest requires no effort at all. Mark’s gospel sums up our situation perfectly, ***“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.”*** (Mark 7:21) We all have this sin bug!

The GOOD NEWS in the middle of all this gloom is the Bible teaches that God is a loving God. Indeed, He is so loving that He has provided His own cure to this the most infectious and deadly disease of all time. The most famous verse in the Bible (John 3:16) states, ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*** The fact of the matter is that God decided that the only way sinful people could be cured was if His one and only sinless Son came to earth, lived a perfect life as a fully human man and paid the penalty of our sin instead of us. This is what Jesus did when He died on Calvary. But Jesus did not stay dead. Three days later He rose from the dead thus demonstrating that He had conquered sin and defeated death for us. 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us, ***“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”***

The only question that remains is, “How do we get the sin cure?” The answer is - trust in what Jesus did on the cross for you. Do not rely on your own efforts or goodness. Only Jesus can make you alive spiritually. You must also repent of your sin. You must tell God you are sorry for it, turn away from it and follow Jesus. 1 John 1:9 makes this clear, ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** This means receiving Christ as your Lord and Saviour. In John 10:9 Jesus says, ***“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.”*** While in John 6:47 Jesus declared, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, he that believes on me has eternal life.”*** After this you must live each day relying on God’s strength to keep you following Jesus. In Hebrews 13:5, Jesus promises, ***“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*** Be sure He will never break His word and His ‘cure’ is guaranteed.

Wouldn’t it be a shocking thing if any of us, after recognising that God had provided the sin cure through the Lord Jesus, neglected to obtain it and instead turned our backs on His grace?

4 BIG Questions

Question 1. ORIGIN. Where did I come from?

Atheistic evolutionists say:

You are the result of the BIG BANG that created everything out of nothing.

Once there was nothing. Now there is something.

NOTHING created EVERYTHING, including YOU.

Your ancestor was a rock. You are an accident.

The Bible records: ***"God created man in His own image."***

So you are not an accident, you are a SPECIAL CREATION.

God is the Father of your first ancestor. You are made in your Father's likeness.

Question 2. MEANING. Is there a purpose to my life? Why am I here?

Atheist, Dr Susan Blackmore says:

"In the end nothing matters...If you really think about evolution and why we human beings are here, you have to come to the conclusion that we are here for absolutely no reason at all."

Paul the Apostle says about God:

"For from Him, and through Him and to Him are all things..."

In the 4th century, a great thinker, Augustine of Hippo, said: *"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You."*

A group of Christians have said:

"Man's chief purpose is to glorify (Honour, love and praise.) God, and enjoy Him forever."

Question 3. MORALITY. Is there such a thing as GOOD and EVIL?

Are we accountable for our lives and actions?

Richard Dawkins says: "The Universe we observe has...no design, no purpose, no EVIL and no GOOD; nothing but blind pitiless indifference."

The Bible says: ***"Man is destined to die once and after that to face judgement..."***

Jesus said, ***"No one is good except God alone."***

Paul quotes from the Old Testament and gives God's verdict on man:

"There is no one who does good, not even one."

Paul comments: ***"All have sinned."*** The writer to the Hebrews says, ***"Without holiness no one will see God."***

4 BIG Questions

However Paul also says, ***"Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many."***

Paul tells the people in Corinth (a very wicked city):

"God made Him who had no sin (Jesus the Christ) to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

Yes, we are accountable and guilty, but Christ has dealt with our guilt and sin. The Apostle Peter tells us:

"He Himself bore our sin in His own body on the tree" (that is, the cross).

Finally, a comment that the British Humanist Society displayed on London buses:

"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." Is that all they can offer to someone with a troubled conscience and a certainty that they must meet a holy God?

Question 4. DESTINY. Where am I going? Is there life after death?

The atheistic verdict is, "You are going nowhere. When you die you're dust. Your whole life counted for nothing."

William B Provine, a historian of Evolutionary Biology says, "There are no gods, no purpose...no goal-directed purposes of any kind. There is no life after death. When I die I am absolutely certain that I am going to be dead." He died in 2015.

But speaking to Christians ***"Christ is indeed risen"***, says Paul. ***"He appeared to more than 500 brothers at the same time."***

Jesus said, to His disciples ***"Because I live you shall live also."***

Paul is sure about it: ***"Now we KNOW if the earthly tent (the body) we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven..."***

Indeed, not only do YOU have a destiny, the whole universe and every created being has one as well.

Jesus tells us about it and He is the Supreme Adjudicator:

"When the Son of Man shall come in all his glory...All nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Read about it in Matthew 25: 31 forward.

Paul warns us, ***"We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body..."*** But he also says that we can be made right with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Are YOU ready for the day of destiny? Is ALL your faith and hope in what Christ has done, when He died for sinners like us on the cross? That is our only sure and certain hope.

Deal of a Lifetime.

I was really excited at the end of November last year, when I got a great Black Friday deal.



I had a cheap little black pay-as-you-go phone, which was very limited in what it could do, and my family always complained, that they could never contact me and encouraged me to splash out and purchase a new one.

Very sheepishly, I went into a large store in the city and looked at a whole array of them, displayed on the wall. What did they all do? Which was the best value? Imagine my pride, as I came out a while later, with a lovely light gold coloured iPhone 7, which didn't cost much more per month, than my old one.

Wow! What a world it has opened up to me! My pics are so clear, I can get lots of apps, I can FaceTime my friends, send messages to any country in the world and even watch my favourite programmes on YouTube.



Long ago, before these deals were invented for the high street, I got the greatest deal ever. It didn't just change my outlook on life, but my whole future.

I started that Sunday as a sinner, on the way to hell, but by lunchtime I was a Christian, on the way to heaven. I knew that I had been born a sinner, and that my good works or church rituals, couldn't make me clean in God's sight. During those morning hours, He made me very aware of my situation, and what I needed to do about it. I knelt beside my bed and spoke to the One, who on a Black Friday afternoon, died a slow, cruel death for me, on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem. I told Him that I was a truly repentant sinner, and asked for His forgiveness. He knew that I was sincere and that I believed that He was the Son of the living God, who died and rose again for me. I handed my whole life over to Him.

Wow! What a world it opened up to me! The great God of heaven forgave me, adopted me into His family, gave me the Holy Spirit to be with me and has guaranteed me a place in heaven.

You too can have assurance of sins forgiven if you repent and turn to Christ. He says in the gospel of John chapter 14:6,

"I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME".



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