

Even Though They Die

The Bible can certainly be a confusing document sometimes. Every time I think I've got a handle on what God has in store for us, I read a story that makes me rethink what I thought. For example, in the Old Testament, when you read the story of King David or Moses, or even Noah or Abraham, you will see that there are times when one of them did something that was not pleasing to God. They were usually punished in some way and the punishment was sometimes severe. King David's first son to Bath Sheba died. Moses was not allowed to go into the Promised Land with Israel. Noah's grandson was cursed.

The point is, the punishment was to be expected because they had done something that God had told them not to do or they had done something that displeased God in some way. Okay I get it. **Bible Lesson # 1:** If you disobey or displease God, you will be punished for it.

Then I read this passage in Mark about the beheading of John the Baptist and I go—wait a minute! What did poor John the Baptist do that he has to lose his head? As far as I can read in the Bible—and I don't think I have any pages missing, -John the Baptist did nothing to displease God. In fact, just the opposite, he did everything he could to please God and prepare the way for Jesus Christ. So, what is going on here in the New Testament? At least with the crucifixion of Jesus we know that his death was paying for our sins. But what did John's death pay for? Why did John the Baptist have to be executed? I can see that John maybe had to die so that there would be a complete separation of his ministry from the ministry of Jesus. But why beheading? Why couldn't he be hit by a runaway cart

or struck by lightning? And look at the circumstances surrounding his death. He had rightly told King Herod that Herod was living in sin with his brother's wife. Herod did not like being told this and put John in prison, but I don't think his intention was to kill him. Still the situation worked itself out that Herod's own words brought about the death of John the Baptist—even though he had done nothing wrong. **Bible Lesson # 2:** So we need to be careful with the words we use. But does that mean we should just stay home and do and say nothing so that we don't offend anyone? Is that what John the Baptist did? Is that what Jesus did? No, they went ahead and preached the message God gave them and they did what God wanted them to do. So, if what we say can get us into trouble, but we still must go out and take the good news of God to all the world, what's the reward that makes it worth risking our lives? Ephesians 1: 3 – 14... spells it out for us. We are to live to the glory of God and even our death will bring glory to God because it signifies the end of our struggle the beginning of our redemption as God's own people. Now this may not be good enough for you but it's good enough for me. God has promised to make us his children through adoption and the Holy Spirit is a sort of down payment on that pledge. When we receive the Holy Spirit, it is a token of God's promise that someday we will be holy spirits.

Bible Lesson # 3 Jesus is God. The only way that today's scripture lesson makes sense is that Jesus was part of the trinity. He was in existence before the earth was even created. He was in Heaven when David was on Earth. And after David died he came to earth as a child born of Mary in the lineage of David. The Pharisees did not believe this and therefore could not conceive what Jesus was talking about. But,

because Jesus came and did what he did for us we have the promise of eternal life.

It doesn't get any better than this. And the promise works whether we die before Jesus returns or we are still alive when Jesus returns. Listen to what Jesus said to Mary, Martha's sister on the occasion of the death of their brother Lazarus, John **11:25-26** ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they **die**, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never **die**. Do you believe this?" The question that Jesus asks of Mary is the question that I ask of you today? Do you believe this? If you do, then nothing should hold you back from becoming a loudspeaker for God. Not age, or youth, not fear or lack of preparation—there is no reason that you can't share the good news of the kingdom of God with someone you love and want to see in the kingdom with you—except that you don't really believe it. What do you believe in? Where's your faith? Who really is your God? God is my God!