

# Rise Up And Build

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*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

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December 27, 2020

## **“What Is Your Life?”**

We have now come to the last Lord’s day of the year 2020. To say the least, it has been a very, very eventful year. The Corona Virus has become a global pandemic, with millions of people worldwide contacting this virus, and the death toll is mounting by the minute. According to the Dec. 23, 2020 issue of the **Tampa Bay Times** “this is the deadliest year in U.S. history. To some degree, all of our lives have been affected by this virus. However, in this article, we are not focusing on the worldwide effects of COVID-19. Instead, we are focusing on **you**, and we are asking the question “*what is your life*,” a question posed in James 3:13-14, which is worded as follows:

(13) “*Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit; (14) whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. **For what is your life?** It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. (15) Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ (16) But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (17) Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:13-17).*

The epistle of James has been referred to as “the gospel of common sense,” so called because it largely deals with life in the every day world, and provides heavenly wisdom for coping with the affairs of life on a day to day basis. The preceding verses certainly fit into that category, for they deal with issues which are both serious and fundamental. They call for self-inventory, and suggest that life ought to be lived one day at a time, and that no person should make plans for the future which do not include God. Much could be said about each phrase or clause in each verse. However, we shall focus our attention upon the question asked in verse 14; “*what is your life.*” We shall consider the question from three different standpoints.

### **“What Is Your Life”**

#### **From the Standpoint of Duration?**

This question is important because we live but one time upon the earth (Heb. 9:27), and our eternal destiny is dependent on the proper use of life on earth. This is clearly taught in 2 Cor. 5:10 wherein the apostle Paul said “*..we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*” Furthermore we must keep in mind the fact that whatever we hope to accomplish on earth must be accomplished in the span of life itself. Jesus, our example, said “*I must work the*

works of Him Who sent Me **while it is day**, the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).

The answer to the question, “what is your life from the standpoint of duration,” was answered by James. He said “*your life...is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*” (v. 14). Job was in full agreement; he said “*Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue*” (Job 14:1-2). Yes, any way you put it, life on earth is brief. At best, it does not take very long to live a life. Compared to eternity, life is like the early morning “vapor” which is gone nearly as quickly as it arrives!

### **“What Is Your Life” From the Standpoint of Purpose?**

The real value of life is not measured by quantity, but quality. The biography of the oldest man on record (Methuselah) is given in three verses (Gen. 5:25-28). Of Methuselah, we know that Enoch was his father, that Lamech was his son, along with other unnamed “*sons and daughters.*” Also, by checking the genealogical records, we conclude that Methuselah most likely died in the year of the flood (he may have even died **in** the flood)! But this is all we know about Methuselah. However, by way of contrast, we state that Jesus lived on earth approximately 33 1/2 years, but there are four books of biography about His life (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). And in addition to the things written, the apostle John said “*there are also many other things Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*” (John 21:25).

The real difference between Jesus and Methuselah was not their respective earth life spans, but their **purpose** in life. Jesus, as a child, said “*I must be about My Father’s business*” (Luke 2:49). During His earthly ministry, He said “*I must work the works of Him who sent me...*” (John 9:4). To His critics, Jesus said “*the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). Jesus never wavered in His determination to “*work the works*” of God and while He was virtually in the very shadows of the cross, Jesus prayed, saying, “*I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the works You have given me to do*” (John 17:4). Yes, Jesus’ earthly life was motivated by heavenly purpose!

However, many amble aimlessly through life, acting as if they were going to live forever, and as if there were no judgment day and no hereafter! The goal of many people can simply be summed up in the words of the rich fool who said to himself, “*take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry*” (Luke 12:19). Others are primarily motivated by the determination to accumulate all the earthly goods they can, hardly pausing to realize that all that they accumulate will be left to others, and no one has any way of knowing whether the recipient “*will be wise or a fool*” (Eccl. 2:19)!

What **should** be your purpose in life”? It is briefly summed up in these words, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God and keep His commandments**, for that is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil*” (Eccl. 12:13,14). Any plans we make in life, which do not include God, are destined to fail! Regardless of the “good” accomplished, and the “goods” accumulated, every life lived which, at death, found the person unprepared to meet God was a wasted life! Friend, **what is your life**, with reference to purpose?

**“What is Your Life”**

## **From the Standpoint of Destiny?**

This issue is inseparably connected with the previous point, for purpose and destiny are as much related as cause and effect.

As it relates to destiny, there are two dramatic contrasts. This is suggested by the words of Jesus in Matt. 7:13-14: “*Enter in by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to **destruction**, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to **life**, and there are few who find it.*” In keeping with these verses, the destiny of most is “*destruction*,” whereas the destiny of others is “*life*.” “*Destruction*” does not denote the cessation of being; rather it is the cessation of **well-being**. This “*destruction*” involves being cast into the “*everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41), a place in which the “*punishment*” is “*everlasting*” in duration (Matt. 25:46). “**Life**,” on the other hand, is “*eternal life*” (Tit. 1:2), and it is “*reserved in heaven*” (2 Pet. 1:4), that holy city which is devoid of death, sorrow, crying, pain, and sin (Rev. 21:4,27), and where its happy citizens can eat forever of the tree of life and drink eternally of the water of life (Rev. 22:1,2).

One sobering thought to keep in mind is this: regardless of the contrasts which may exist among human beings with reference to gender, race, color, creed, nationality, status, intellect, character, or purpose, every person has one thing in common with every other person, namely this: he is a creature of **eternity**! One may wish he had never been born, or he may commit suicide, but he can never escape eternity! For all eternity, he (or she) will be somewhere, and that “*somewhere*” will either be heaven (with all its joys), or hell (with all its agonies). There is no place in between heaven and hell!

### **Conclusion:**

In view of the truths herein stated, we stress the necessity of obeying God, of seeking “*first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33). Let us develop the attitude of Jesus Who said “*I have come down from heaven, not do to My will, but the will of Him Who sent Me*” (John 6:38).

James asked the question, “*what is your life*,” and we have shown that real “**life**” is not just about food and drink; it is not simply fun and frolic; it is not power, prestige and profit. True life is “**eternal life**,” and this life is in the Son of God; hence, “*He who has the Son **has life**.*” (1 John 5:11,12). Friend, “*what is **your** life?*” If you are not a Christian, then “*your life*,” at best, is incomplete, and your eternal future will be nothing less than unending agony — unless, of course, you obey the gospel and then live for God. But if you are a faithful Christian, and if you remain faithful, then life is a time for rejoicing (Phil. 4:4), and, best of all, “*the crown of life*” (Rev. 2:10), and all the glories that that expression implies, awaits you. So don’t simply make a living; instead live for God, and **make a life!**

—Bobby Witherington

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