

The Reality, Hebrews 2:14-18

This Roman mosaic is from the ancient city of Pompeii. It was buried in AD 79. This was a common Roman theme called *Memento Mori* - "Remember we all die". There are various themes: a level [plumbline], balance scale, a death's head, symbols of poverty and riches [clothing], symbol of chance or circumstance [wheel] and symbol of the soul [butterfly]. The skull holds down the soul until the wheel moves and the skull falls and the soul escapes.

The Thoughts over these next Few Sundays will be taken from the book "Immortality" by Clay Jones [2020]

Facing Immortality



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Definition of Terms

from Immortal by Clay Jones [2020] pages 16-17

Heaven – “I mean our Future eternal state of supreme enjoyment of the Creator, each other and His creation.”

Immortality Project – “Immortality projects are attempts to, in some way, live forever.”

There are 2 types:

Mortality Mitigating project – “I mean the naturalist’s attempt to make death into something that isn’t so bad.”

Materialism – “Materialism is the belief that nothing exists beyond matter.”

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Definition of Terms

from Immortal by Clay Jones [2020] pages 16-17

[continued]

Metaphysics – “Metaphysics is the study of the real, fundamental nature of things.”

Naturalism – “Naturalism is the belief that nature is all there is”

•Carl Sagan [1934-96] “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” *[This is a clear statement of naturalism].*



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In this painting by Dutch painter Peiter Brugal he pictures the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 11 the story of the tower of Babel is told. It is a tale of humanity trying to accomplish salvation [immortality] without God. Human culture is according to many sociologists simply humanity trying to accomplish immortality.



“The Tower of Babel” by Peiter Brugal 1563

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.

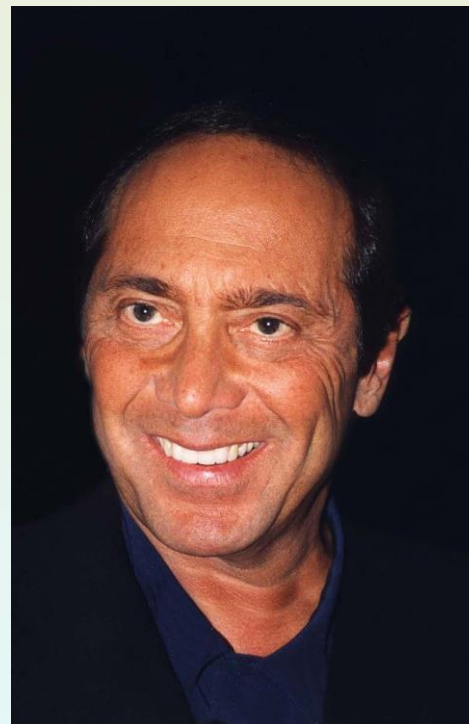
17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Invictus
[1875]

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*1969 album by
Frank Sinatra
"My Way"
which debuted
the song "I did
it My way"*



*Paul Anka wrote the
lyrics which he adapted
to a French tune he
purchased rights to in
1968. The song was
written for Sinatra*

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Facing Immortality

BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY [1849-1903]

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Philosopher Luc Ferry in his 2011 book - *A Brief History of Thought...* - states:

“The quest for salvation without God is at the heart of every great philosophical system, and that is essential and ultimate objective.”

Clay Jones says that this statement stunned him, 1st in its absolute categorization of all philosophy and 2nd its blatant honesty.



“The Death of Socrates by Jacques Louis David – 1787

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For Luc Ferry philosophy is a way to make sense of and escape the one absolute reality of life...we all die. It is a search for a way to escape without God.

Clay Jones went back and looked at some of the major philosophers in history and indeed this did seem to be the objective. As humans we struggle with a desire for immortality.

Jacque Louis David was a remarkable painter of the French Revolutionary period. He became a supporter of Robespierre. He supported the Reign of Terror.

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“The Death of Socrates by Jacques Louis David – 1787

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Romans 2:3-7[ESV]

3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”:

7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

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“Let's us imagine a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death where some are killed each day in the sight of the others, and those who remain see their own fate in that of their fellows, and wait their turn, looking at each other sorrowfully and without hope. It is an image of the condition of men.”

Blaise Pascal

“How can I rest, how can I be at peace?
Despair is in my heart...I am afraid of death.”

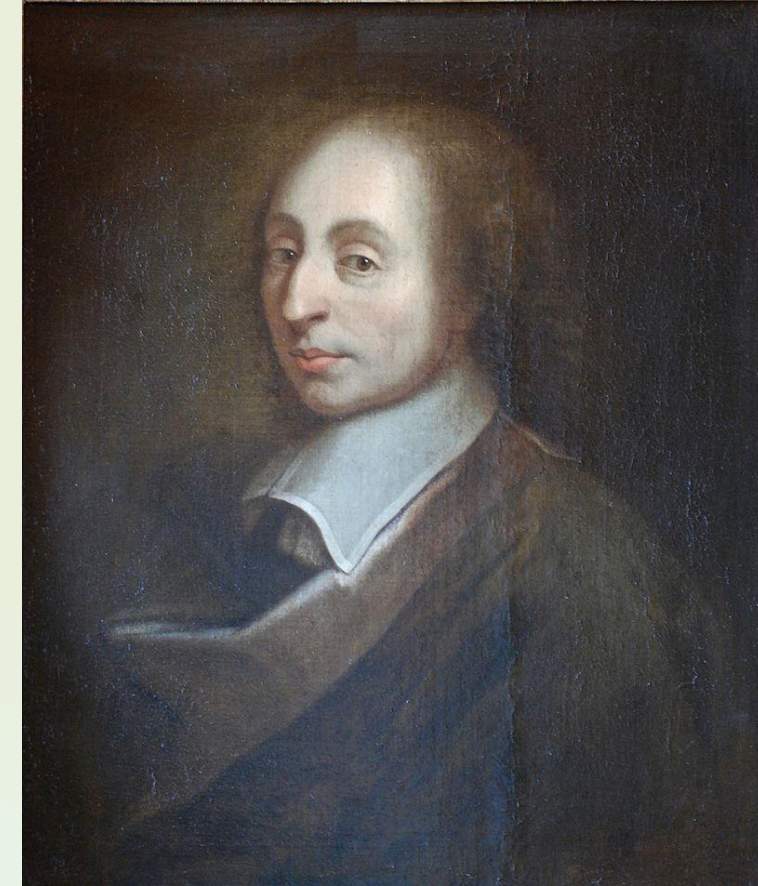
- The Epic of Gilgamesh [*his tale goes back to at least 2100 BC*]

Gilgamesh witnesses the slow painful death of his friend Enkidu. This terrifies him, sending him on a quest for personal immortality.

Facing Immortality



Assyrian statue of the Mesopotamian hero Gilgamesh, called the “beast Master”



Blaise Pascal [1623-62] Mathematician, Scientist Philosopher, Inventor and deeply committed Christian

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Psalm 8:4-8 [NKJV]

4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all *things* under his feet,

7 All sheep and oxen — Even the beasts of the field,

8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas.

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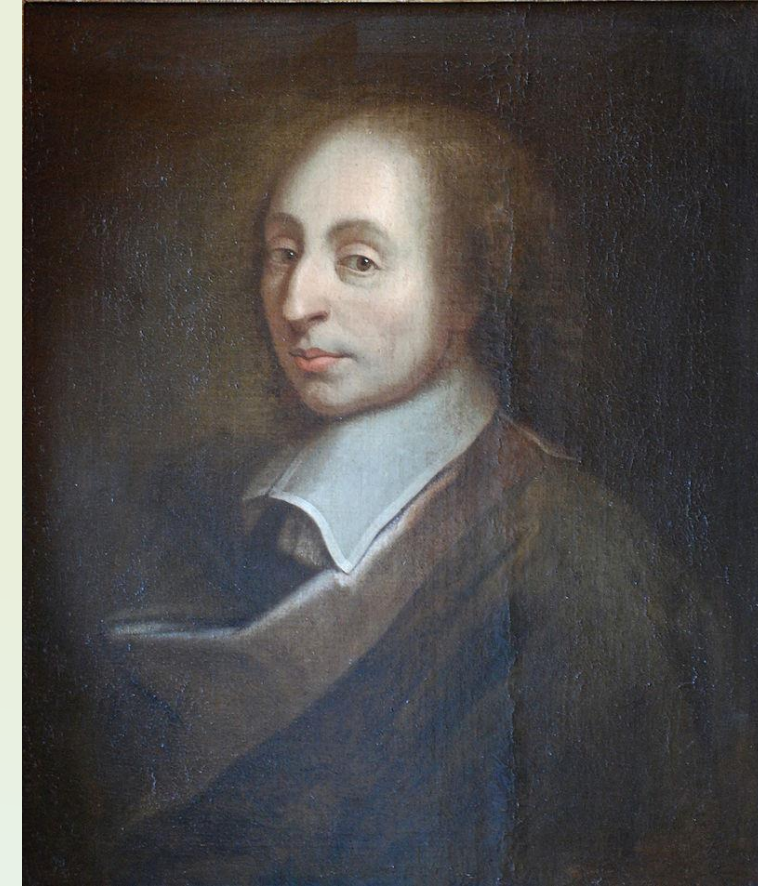
Like Gilgamesh and the people in Pascal's illustration we sense we were made for something better. Yet as the writer of Hebrews in chapter 2 in the verses preceding verse 14. Indicates by quoting Psalm 8:4-6 That we as humans do not live up to the promise stated by David in this Psalm. In fact, we due to our fear of death and stubborn self-will end up perpetrating all kinds of evil.

Gilgamesh is not a "good" hero. He is often a brutal bully, arrogant and violent. He oppresses the people over which he rules but he is to the Mesopotamian kingdoms a hero because he molds the world to his will until brought face to face with his own mortality.

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Gilgamesh's tale concludes in confusion and almost embarrassment as the hero has learned the 2 tasks necessary to secure immortality only to be too weak to conclude a simple task and to inattentive and careless to guard the other. There is no hope for immortality and the tale closes in confusion with Gilgamesh's death.

Pascal live only to age 39, but he had a moment of supreme exaltation when he came to Christ and realized the promise of immortality in submission to Him as Lord. Jesus conquered death and the Devil who plays on our fear of Death. Genesis 3.



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Genesis 3:20-24 [NKJV]

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" —

23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

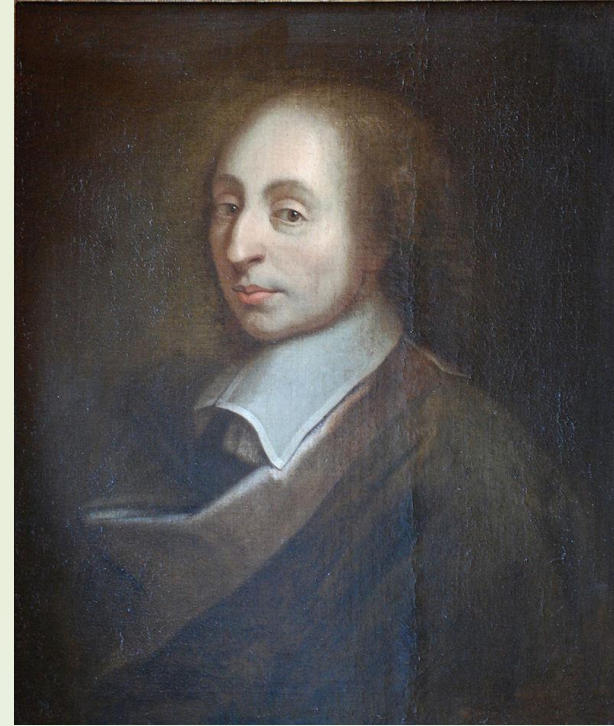
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These five verses tell an enigmatic story.

It is a strange series of statements for several reasons: Adam's hope for the future was found in the generations that would follow. Why? God does not want humanity to eat of the Tree of Life and become immortal. Why? Isn't that the goal of the resurrection, to make us immortal? If it could be accomplished in another way, why the Cross? Why must human bodies return to the physical elements they are made of? Why leave the Tree of Life there and keep humans from partaking of it? The text does not supply answers for any of these questions.

The implication is that for that brief moment humanity could have grasped immortality on their own terms.

God's concern might be immortality on our own terms would be worse than hell. C. S. Lewis proposed that eternity with our sinfulness, selfishness and decay compounding century after century would be overwhelming to us and God's creation. We would become brutal monsters in the true sense of the word.



*Blaise Pascal
[1623-62]
Mathematician,
Scientist
Philosopher,
Inventor and deeply
committed Christian*

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“The fact that we can die, that we can be ill at all, is what perplexes us; the fact that we now, for a moment live and are well is irrelevant to that perplexity.”

- William James [1842-1910] one of America’s greatest philosophers
William James later in his life to the chagrin of his atheist and agnostic friends turned to a spiritism.

Elisebeth Kubler-Ross [1926-2004] had dramatic impact on modern thought. She began as an atheist but ended in disillusioned spiritism. She is famous for The Five Stages of Dying and Grief from “On Death and Dying” 1969:

1. Denial, 2. Anger, 3. Bargaining, 4. Depression, 5. Acceptance.

Acceptance was defined as being “void of feeling” not peaceful or resolved.

In 1969 as an Atheist she characterized belief in life after death as a form of denial, specifically “religious denial”.

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Elisebeth Kubler-Ross [1926-2004]. Began as an atheist ended in disillusioned spiritism.

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Isaiah 8: [ESV]

19 And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?

20 To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward.

22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

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In the 1970s as she found death to be too big a concept to deal with she like William James turned to spiritism [Mediums, seances and encounters with spirit guides]. She like Wm. James quickly lost credibility and found herself to be the shill of crafty charlatans. In 1996 she had her first massive stroke. Shortly before her death in 2004 she was asked which stage of grief she was in during her dying process, she responded “anger”.

Atheists want God not to exist but even more they want to be able to create a god that will grant them immortality but not demand the submission of their will to his own.

Luc Ferry the atheistic French philosopher states that we as humans are “intoxicated by ourselves” and crave a salvation we can create for ourselves. This is why so many young atheists are so angry and belligerent shaking their fists at God and so many older atheists are only numb.

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In Hebrews 2:14-18 part of the answer to this riddle in Creation is given. To restore humanity to the immortality that God created us for, he must deal with both our spiritual and physical sinfulness through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Immortality is not something we grasp for ourselves but something the perfect man, Jesus, accomplished on our behalf.

The only question is: “Why would anyone refuse this grace?” Might it be that we still want immortality on our own terms?



“The Tower of Babel” by Peiter Brugal 1563

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