

I Want To Live Forever.

1 Samuel 15:10-12

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

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

There are 2 types: Literal and Symbolic



I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

Clay Jones in his book “Immortality” [2020] states that there are 2 general ways humans try to accomplish immortality. The 1st he calls “literal”. In these we find attempts to physically live forever. In the 2nd category we have “symbolic” attempts at immortality. In these we try to establish a legacy that will assure we are remembered forever.

Literal – A person tries to figure out a way to physically or spiritually live forever.

Symbolic – A person tries to establish either a physical monument [example: a building] or a living monument [example: children].



*“Saul Tears Samuel’s Robe”
1 Samuel 15*

10 The word of the LORD came to Samuel:

11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night.

12 And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal."

I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

The oldest living human. The oldest verified living human lived to the age of 122 years, 164 days [verified – others claimed to be older but were unverified], Jeanne Calment died in 1997 in Arles France. She had lived there her whole life. There are a number of people who are centarians [those who live to age 100 or above] in the world. Almost all have a genetic marker that indicates longevity. Most live rather routine lives devoid of a great deal of stress and get moderate exercise and regular rest. Most are mentally alert until near their death and most remain relatively mobile until after the age of 105. Many live on their own until after age 100.

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Above – Jeanne Calment in 1895 at age 20

Jeanne Calment, 1996 at age 121.

Jeanne lived to be 122 yrs and 169 days. She outlived all her family.



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I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

Other than these factors they eat widely divergent diets and have some habits that we would generally consider unhealthy [Jeanne smoked 2 cigarettes a day until she was 117 – others drink alcohol in larger quantities than is considered healthy]. Interestingly in Genesis 6:3 God set the upper limit of human life at around 120 years.



Jiroemon Kimura, died in 2013, he was the oldest living man at 116 yrs and 54 days. However, he is listed at 21 in the list of oldest humans. There are 20 women ahead of him in the list. Here he is pictured at age 115. Japan has the largest per capita number of those exceeding 100 years of age.

Genesis 6:1-6 [ESV]

1 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.

3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."

4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. 5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

Emperor Qin Shi Huang [259-210 BC], 1st emperor of China. At age 40 he became deeply concerned about finding a way to live forever. He spent the last 9 years of his life searching for eternal life. He sent young people all over the kingdom and known world in search of remedies, cures and fables of immortality. At one point in fury he buried 460 Chinese scholars alive because they could not provide a way to achieve eternal life. Desperation to live forever can drive people to strange “snake oil” attempts. And even brutal measures. One strange method now popular is “Parabiosis” [The joining of 2 living organisms] – transfusing the blood and stem cells from 16-25 years old into elderly to encourage regeneration. Often, we blame the victim because we do not wish to face our own mortality.

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Emperor Qin Shi Huang [259-210 BC]

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Many health gurus die long before this. In fact, one of the best known, Jerome Rodale [founder of Prevention Magazine], shortly after declaring he would live to be over 100, died of a heart attack during a TV interview on the Dick Cavett show in 1971. He was 72.

Interestingly the present average lifespan of Americans is just at 78 years of age. This is a major increase from 1900 when the average lifespan was 45. Most of the increase happened by the 1950s when infant mortality rates went from nearly 15% to less than 1%. In addition, the introduction of antibiotics in the 1940s prevented early death from infections. The advent of vaccines for childhood diseases in the 1950s also decreased the death rate for children. A marginal contributor has been better nutrition since the 1940s. Psalm 90:10-12.



Emperor Qin Shi Huang [259-210 BC]

10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

11 Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

Moses in Psalm 90:10 indicates that average lifespan for the Jewish people in the desert was between 70 and 80 years. God had promised to protect the Israelites from common diseases that other human populations experienced while they wandered in the desert [Deuteronomy 7:12-15]. So, unless a person has remarkable genetics, it is unlikely that he or she will live far beyond 80. In fact if all cancer was cured the average life span would only rise a little more than 2 years.



*“Moses and Joshua prepare Aaron” for burial
by James Tissot*

Deuteronomy 7:12-15 [ESV]

12 "And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers.

13 He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.

14 You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock.

15 And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you.

I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

One solution supposedly is Cryonics but there are many problems with freezing yourself in hopes of a future cure:

1. Will anyone want to thaw you out?
2. Freezer Burn – Ice crystals form in thawing flesh destroy cellular structure.
3. It has never been done successfully with any animal at -100 degree C.
4. Acoustic fracturing of brain tissue.
5. Freezing must be started within minutes of the heart stopping to avoid cellular degeneration.



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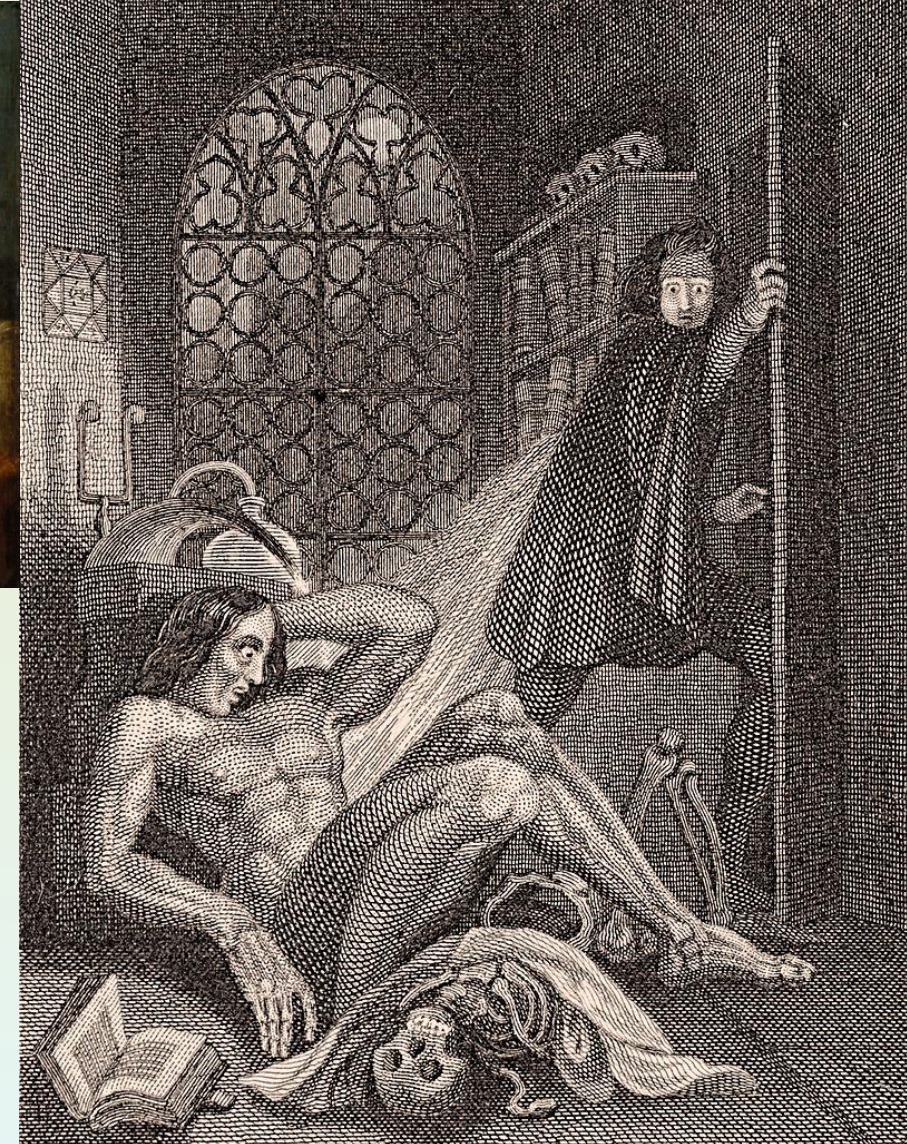
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Another solution supposedly technology interface with humanity this is called “Transhuman” or H+ [Human plus]

Mary Shelley [1797-1851] at 17 lost her child as premature infant. She often had dreams about warming the child back to life. In 1815 experiments based on the work of Luigi Galvani were being conducted on executed criminals’ bodies. Electric probes would be inserted into the muscles causing them to contort and animate. These became popular entertainments.



Mary Shelly wrote “Frankenstein” when she was 20 years old on a dare from her husband. The year was 1818. Frontpiece of the 1835 edition. The monster awakes.

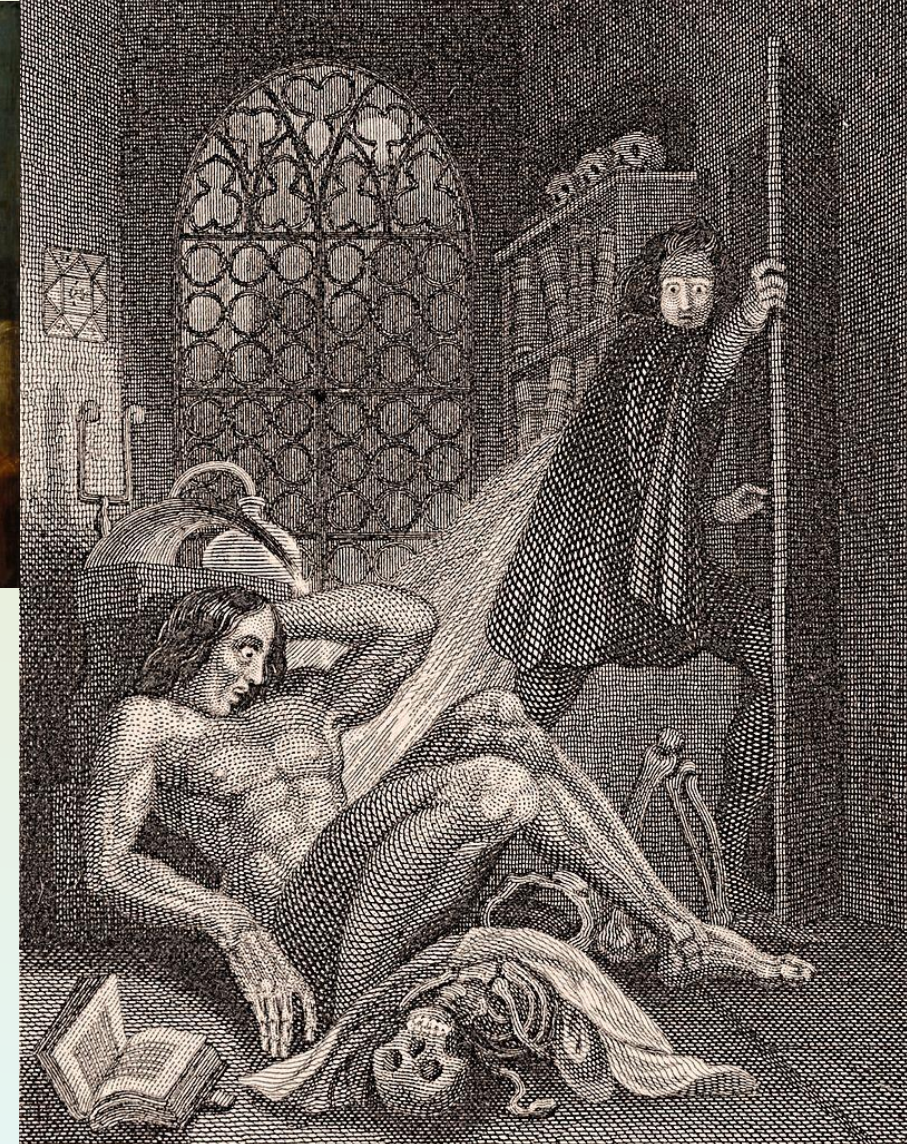


I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

Another possibility is Brain Upload by mirroring our brains with computer technology. Or creating symbiosis of our brain with technology. The problem is Computers can't do a lot of things, AI is not just a matter of the speed of calculation. Decision making, symbolic meaning and spacial concepts and relationships are things that a computer can not grasp but a 3 year old can grasp. These are key aspects of what is called "consciousness".



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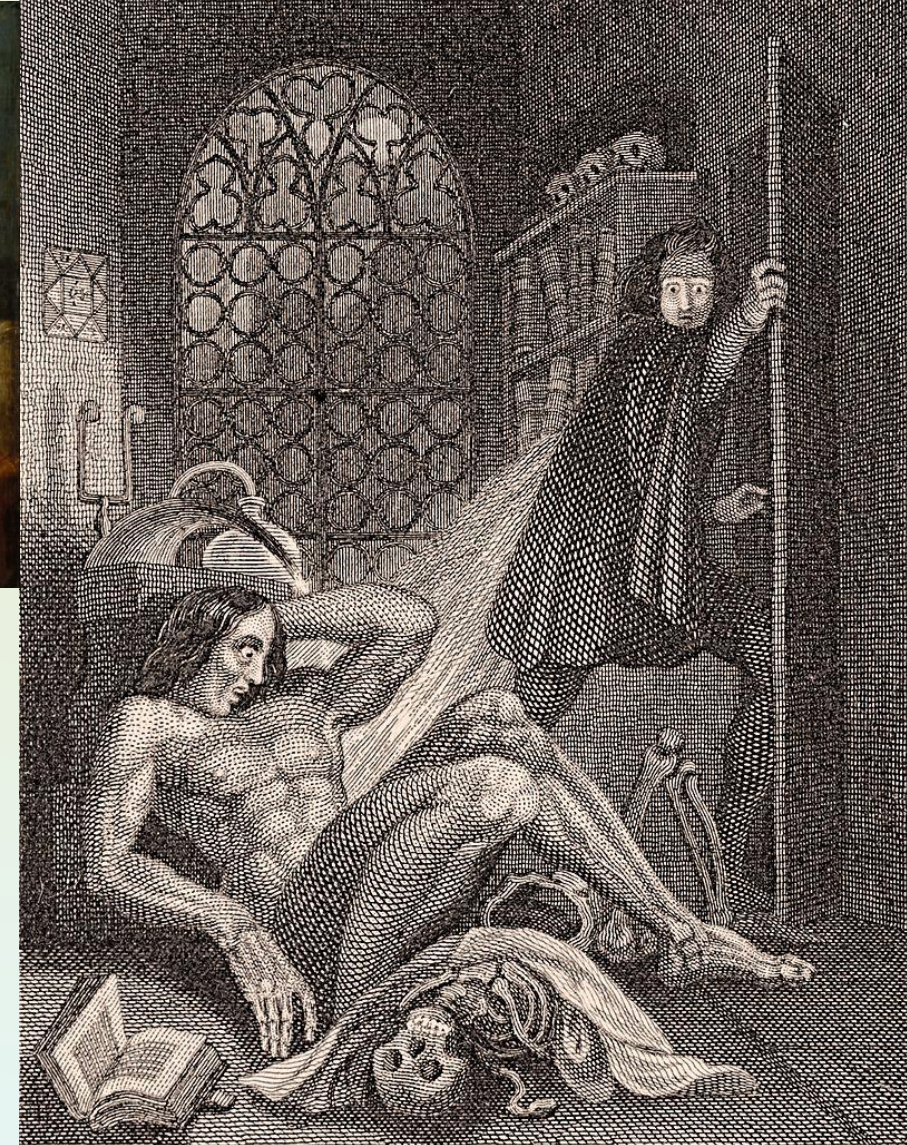
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Creation of an artificial brain is the longed for goal. But in our brains are almost 100 billion neurons that have around 10,000 connections to their neighboring neurons. Not only are neurons affected by electronic nerve pluses but they also respond to hormones. We would need hundreds of thousands of years to map just one human brain and its activities. So Naturalists wait on the Singularity. This is the hypothetical point when technological growth will move so fast that it will become uncontrollable and irreversible and will create a super-intelligence in a computer. The real Frankenstein Monster.

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8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

I Want To Live Forever. 1 Samuel 15:10-12

Human symbolic immortality projects are believed to drive the creation of most civilizations. We see this in Genesis 11:1-9 with the Tower of Babel. The uncomfortable reality is that most great civilizations in attempting to establish their immortality succumb to terrible brutality. Individuals seeking personal symbolic immortality will also perform or tolerate unspeakable acts. Clay Jones separates Symbolic Immortality Projects into 2 types Those with purpose and those without purpose.



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Symbolic Immortality Projects with purpose –

1. Procreation: Family, Adoption and our tribe. Passing on our genetics ether through DNA or Nurture. Ecclesiastes 2:18-21
2. Accomplishments: Creation, Heroism, Activism – Purpose driven immortality projects. Genesis 11:1-9



“The Tower of Babel” by Peiter Brugel 1563

Ecclesiastes 2:18-21[ESV]

18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,

19 and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,

21 because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

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Genesis 11:1-9 [ESV]

1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."

8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

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Symbolic Immortality Projects with
out purpose –

1. Celebrity.
2. Fandom.
3. Just to be known. Even if it is
only a footnote in History



“The Tower of Babel” by Peiter Brugel 1563

10 For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.

11 Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names.

12 Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.

13 This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. Selah

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When we try to establish our own immortality we will be disappointed.

As Christians we recognize that trusting in Jesus Christ is our only hope for true immortality. And Christian faith is the only guard against foolishly chasing literal and symbolic immortality.



*Jesus teaching by the Sea of Galilee
by James Tissot*

23 "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! 24 Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, 27 whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

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What is your Immortality Project?



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