

# Coming Up In The Next Half Hour, Proof Of Life After Death!

I was hooked by these words confidently spoken by one of the hosts of NBC's Today Show on a dreary January morning. A thought about what that proof might be flashed through my mind almost immediately, but I had to see and hear this proof for myself! I persevered through 30 minutes of "news" segments that normally would have caused me to change channels. Finally, after 'a word from our sponsors' that seemed to go on forever, the proof came: proof that confirmed my initial suspicions!

The 'proof' of life after death came from two guests. The first was Dr. Jeffery Long, a medical doctor. He had studied one thousand, three hundred accounts of 'near-death experiences' commonly referred to as "NDE's." The results of his research was compiled and presented in his new book, "*Evidence of the Afterlife - The Science of Near-death Experiences*". He claimed to have uncovered nine strands of proof for life after death. When pressed to reveal one such 'strand', he gave the following evidence: people born blind who lived through a near death experience were able to describe a visual experience of light and a higher power that appeared identical to those who are sighted. Another strand of evidence came from some of his international subjects. He found that people in parts of the world who have never heard of NDE's had near-death experiences similar to those of North American people (who have been exposed to them for decades). Yet another strand of evidence came from children under five, who reported near-death experiences similar to their adult counterparts.

The second guest was Mary Jo Rapini, one of Long's case studies. A brain aneurism threw her into a state of limbo. As she hovered between life and death she experienced an incredible vision. She saw a tunnel. At the end of the tunnel was a bright light of an intensity she had never experienced before. She entered the tunnel and passed through it and into the light. When she came into the light she saw god. She heard god call her name, pick her up and hold her. She felt a peace that was beyond all human comprehension. She heard god say that she could not stay in the light. She protested. She tried to build a case for remaining with god. She explained that she was a good person and a good mother. She had volunteered many hours at a cancer clinic. However, her pleadings were met with this response from god: "Mary Jo, have you ever loved anyone the way you have been loved here?" Her response: "I'm human, I can't" The Almighty's response: "You can do better." She came back. She, like many others who lived through an NDE, felt compelled to share her experience with others.

The title to Long's book is accurate: in the final analysis he presented '*evidence*' or '*testimony*' of witnesses concerning life, death and afterlife. Like the evidence of any witness in a legal proceeding, we listen to the testimony given and either place our '*faith and trust*' in it or reject it. We have no way of knowing, with absolute certainty, that all the testimony compiled by Long is true; that is, really happened. We must believe the testimony of the medical teams which made a diagnosis; that the subject of each near-death experience was actually dead for a period of time, really experienced something and was revived from death. We must believe the subjects of Long's book crossed the boundary between life and death and then came back to life. We have to believe and trust that Mary Jo Rapini, and the 1,299 other cases Dr. Long studied, want to assure their fellow travelers through this life that they do not have to be afraid of dying and of living. We have to believe that each of them wants to reveal the existence of something out there that is bigger than we are. They want to shout from the rooftops that this higher power cares for us and wants to give us life after death. We have to believe and trust that Dr. Long felt a compulsion to compile and present these experiences in a rigorous scientific way, so that we too can believe. We have to believe that Dr. Long, and all those he studied, wants us to have hope and a future. We have to believe they are not testifying for sordid gain or the need to have 15 minutes of fame.

I have a question for you. Does Dr. Long's testimony pique your interest in life after death? Would you be willing to hear the testimony of those who have straddled the line between this dimension characterized by

time, mass, limitation, fragility and mortality, and another dimension – specifically, of eternity and the eternal one? If you are so inclined, I want to challenge you. I want to challenge you to hear some testimony about life, death and the afterlife. I challenge you to hear this promise shouted by the eternal God from eternity to this world, through His prophet Hosea: "*I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?*" (Hosea 13:14) I challenge you to hear testimony concerning an eternal one who straddled the boundary between mortality and eternity; of Jesus, the Son of the eternal God who became a human being - who became mortal.

As you read this article, many churches will be in the middle of the season we call Lent. Lent leads to Good Friday (April 2) and Easter Sunday (April 4). During the season of Lent and the week leading up to Easter, our worship intensifies. In addition to Sunday services at 10:30 AM, we meet for midweek Lenten Meditations on Thursdays at 6:00PM. We study the testimony concerning Jesus. The Holy Bible testifies that Jesus ransomed us from death and the grave, not with His divinity but with His humanity. He saved us from death by His dying. Jesus did not have a near-death experience. Jesus had an actual death experience. The Bible's testimony is painstakingly clear. He died! He was as dead as one could possibly be. He was in the grave for three days, and on the third day, God raised His dead body to eternal life. The resurrected Jesus showed Himself to His disciples. He showed Himself to two of them (Luke 24:13-35), then ten, then eleven (John 20:19-31) and up to 500 at once (1 Corinthians 15:6). The resurrected Jesus even appeared to a sworn enemy, Paul, a persecutor of the church (Acts 9:1-19). Jesus changed Paul from an enemy to a friend and witness to His resurrection. God compelled these witnesses to speak and testify to the resurrection of Jesus so that we can have faith and trust in God's existence, His love for us, life after death and hope for today and for eternity.

I challenge you to go to a church near you and hear this testimony. If you do not have a church home or feel so inclined, come and join us at Grace. We hear this testimony year after year. We hear this testimony because it gives us faith and trust in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, hope and a future. If you are willing to give Dr. Long and his 1,300 case studies a chance, why not give God a chance? Is it possible that, through this evidence, Jesus will show himself to you? Come and see!

In Christ

Pastor Ed Skutshek

*Watch for articles by Pastor Ed on April 2 Good Friday, and April 4 Easter Sunday.*