

“Avatars Don’t Get to Sleep”

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

I read some interesting (and disturbing) news articles online. There is a Russian scientist (being funded by a Russian billionaire) who says that, within 10 years, he will be able to download your brain and human consciousness into a computer (an artificial brain). The first stage would be for you to live in a robot body. Eventually, the goal is for your conscious mind to walk around in a hologram image, so that you could even “walk through walls.” He calls the project “Avatar” (like the movie).

It never ceases to amaze me how sinful man’s desire has never changed from the time of Adam. This project gives a person the chance to be your own savior, provide for your own eternal life, and take the place of God.

However, think about eternal life according to this Russian scientist. You can live forever, and even “walk through walls” like Jesus did in His resurrected body as He entered the upper room. But think about this – the best of the blessings from God would go away. You would never again feel the touch or embrace of someone you love. You would never again enjoy the taste or satisfaction of food or drink.

Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes: “Sweet is the sleep of a laborer.” If you are a robot or hologram, you will never have the joy of a hard day’s

work and the satisfaction of rest when that day is done. These are all blessings from God. But the supporters of Avatar argue that they can give you a life without pain, where you never get sick, and you never have to fear death (unless your batteries run out).

This reminded me another movie. The Pirates of the Caribbean movies. (We are going all over the place in today's sermon). If you saw the first of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies, The Curse of the Black Pearl (which I think is the best of the series), Captain Barbosa and his crew are cursed. They stole some Aztec gold and were put under a curse. Part of the curse is that they cannot die. They will live forever under this curse. But food and drink does not satisfy them. They have no taste. They feel no pain. They feel nothing. They compare it to living in hell. Captain Barbosa's greatest dream is to take a bite of an apple and enjoy it.

In the days of leper colonies, beyond the isolation and being cut off from regular society, it was said the worst part of leprosy was that your hands and feet and much of your body became numb. There was no pain.

The underlying theme of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies is the vain attempt to live forever or at least postpone the judgment, a phrase that Davy Jones uses several times in later movies. As much as someone wants to free themselves from the body, the pinnacle of God's creation, the reality of the judgment will not go away. You cannot save yourself.

And every time the attempt is made to rescue yourself rather than allowing God to provide, you end up in chains – in slavery, in prison. In the days of Moses, the Israelites grumbled against God, who was providing for them out in the wilderness with manna (bread from heaven). But the Israelites said, “We should go back to Egypt (and be slaves once again). We remember the pots of meat and leaks and onions.”

St. Paul continually warns his listeners of the danger of going back into “the slavery of sin.” Every attempt to have “freedom” apart from God always puts you in chains. This Avatar project would put you into an eternal prison, at least until Judgment Day comes and then you would really know what an eternal prison is.

It is so funny to me that whenever a “new” concept for salvation comes along, it always has its roots in the false teachings of the past. As Solomon said, “There is nothing new under the sun.” I said before that the desire to save yourself and take the place of God goes all the way back to Adam.

Well, the goal of this project – to be alive in spirit, but be free from the body – is classic Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism. The Greek philosopher Plato said, “The body is the prison house for the soul.” The Gnostics, those keepers of secret knowledge, said that the physical world is evil and only that which is pure spirit is good.

All of this nonsense that falls under the banner of “New Age” teaching is just repackaged old heresies of the past. Anyone who tells you that they have a path to salvation apart from Christ is leading you to

an eternal prison. As I said last week, there are only two religions in the world: the Gospel (the good news of salvation in Christ) and everything else (all the vain attempts to get to heaven through the Law or the hope to live forever in this world).

The goal we have. The great hope we have is the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. God created you to have a body. Yes, after the resurrection, Jesus could walk through walls. But He also sat down and ate fish with the disciples. He said to Thomas, “Put your fingers in the nail marks. . . Touch me and see that I am real.”

In His Word, God promises again and again that we will be “raised in our bodies.” And we will enjoy the choicest of all foods and the best of all there is to drink. Our work, our toil will be filled with joy as it was in the days of Adam before the Fall. Our bodies will enjoy the satisfaction of rest that comes when our work is complete.

God even uses this image when speaking of death. We hear of the “sleep” of death after a lifetime of work in the kingdom. Those who have died in Christ are not “asleep”, as if they are snoring away waiting for Christ to return. The bliss of heaven – with no worries, your work has been completed – this is compared to the joy of a restful night’s sleep after a long day of work. “Sweet is the sleep of a laborer.” It is one of the many blessings that God has given you in your body. Amen.