

Death and Judgement - Part 1

Title: Death and Judgement

Text: Hebrews 9:27

Introduction: It has been said, there are two things for certain in the world, death and taxes, but some don't pay taxes. I would say there are two things for certain, death and judgement. We will all stand before God, saved or unsaved. Genesis 2:17 **"but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."** Unless the Lord returns we will all die a natural death, depart this shell we inhabit, and for the Christian, enter into the presence of the Lord, but for the unbeliever, the eternity of hell.

Too many of us earthly focused at times. James 4:14 **"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."** Most people don't like to discuss the fact that life is short and fading. The reason is many are too in love with this world. The moment you are conceived begins the process to death. Job describes life, **"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."** Romans 5:12 **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."**

In our text, the word *appointed* literally means *"reserved or laid up"* and signifies that death for us is reserved by God in a time we do not know. It is used in 2 Timothy 4:8 **"in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness."** Colossians 1:5 **"because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."** Thus we are appointed a time, a time laid up, for our earthly death.

Death is not a punishment for Christians¹. Romans 8:1 **"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** For the Christian the penalty for sin has been paid. Even though Christians die, we should not view death as punishment from God. All of that has been paid by Christ, Mark 10:45 **"to give His life a ransom for many."**

Death is the final outcome of living in a fallen world². We live in this world, which is fallen, sinful and wicked. God didn't chose to remove us at the moment of our salvation, but allows us to be sanctified in this world through His word. We have all the salvation we need at the moment of conversion, but we grow in the Lord, and our salvation isn't fully experienced until we see God. Death is the last aspect of this fallen world that will be removed, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 **"then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death."** Furthermore the glorious hope of Christ's return removes this curse, 1 Corinthians 15:54-56 **"But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"** But until then we will see it, be around it and it will happen to us. We will endure natural

¹ Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem, pp. 810

² Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem, pp. 811

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calamities, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, evil, wickedness, all of which are associated with the fall. As the text says, the last enemy has yet to be destroyed.

God uses the experience of death to complete our sanctification³. Sometimes suffering is a result of sin, but not always. There are times when God is using it for our good, cf. Romans 8:28. Hebrews 12:6 “**For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.**” It’s important to note that not all discipline is from sin, but God uses it to strengthen our walk and trust in Him. We should view all hardships, sufferings and trials as God using them for good.

Death is the only way to transition to eternal life with God. And God uses this to help us see Him and who He is clearer. In the suffering of this life we see death as a way to being fully sanctified. Listen to the challenge the Lord gave to the church at Smyrna, “**Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**” (Revelation 2:10). Paul says this in Philippians 3:10 “**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.**” No matter what we face today, the suffering, sickness, trials, or persecution, we must be faithful until the end. Because we know that our dying, and leaving this earthly shell will only put us in the presence of God.

Paul being in prison said “**according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death**” (Philippians 1:20). For the Christian, dying or being martyred will be a glorious translation from earth to glory, yet, God will be glorified in such as well. In either case, we will be healed. Death is the enemy and it is the last thing to be destroyed.

Our experience of death completes our union with Christ.⁴ Why didn’t God just translate us to heaven when we became a Christian? Romans 8:17 “**if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.**” 1 Peter 4:13 “**but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.**” So our earthly death will be the completion of the union with Christ, we will be home, we will be in a state of no more suffering or trials. But it only comes with earthly death.

Our obedience to God is more important than preserving our own lives.⁵ I am not suggesting you are to not defend yourself nor not take any necessary medications to help you live. Had it not been for medical advances of our time, my treatment in 2015/16 would not have been available. And

³ Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem, pp. 811, 812

⁴ Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem, pp. 812, 813

⁵ Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem, pp. 813

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many of you have utilized the same treatments for your life threatening conditions. Acts 21:13 Paul says, "For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Furthermore in Acts 14:19-20a "But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city." Peter and John standing before the council when told to stop preaching Jesus, they replied, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This isn't in conflict with Romans 13 where we are to obey our leaders and even their unjust tax laws or other silly laws. But when a government forces you to violate the commands of Scripture we invoke Acts 5:29. We won't deny or shame our Lord. We will be faithful, even to death for His name, Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."

The point is as Christians we should view death not as something we are losing (our life) but as something we are gaining, eternal life, seeing our Lord.

How do we as Christians view death and the death of others? As with all things in our life on earth, marriage, family, jobs, etc., we must have a biblical view. The Scripture encourages us to view our own death, not with fear, but with joy at the prospect of being with Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:8 is a promise where there's no ambiguity, "we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." Yet we find in a Philippian jail Paul says, "according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain, But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better." (Philippians 1:19-23). Paul, wasn't fearing the persecution that could lead to his death, he was looking forward with joy to be with Christ. Yet, he wanted to stay and do the work of the Lord on earth.

We shouldn't live in fear of death, nor should we go about leaping off of building tops or do things that are not wise. Paul said while in prison when he said, "and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Philippians 1:14). We aren't to fear government authorities who try to silence the Word of God. Psalms 23 isn't just a Psalm to read at a funeral, it's a Psalm for life, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." That is present tense form of comfort from the Word of God. He will walk with you in the midst of death.

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The death of Christian friends and relatives⁶. People have often said not to mourn at their funeral. And for the Christian that's true, they are with Jesus, but we, who still remain here on earth, mourn at the loss. We know they are with the Lord. After Stephen was stoned in Acts 7, his friends buried him "*Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.*" Even Jesus wept (John 11:35) at the death of Lazarus. David wept and grieved over the death of Saul and Jonathan.

Application: The sorrow we feel, is sovereignly mingled with hope and joy. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 "*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.*" Paul isn't suggesting they shouldn't grieve concerning those who have died, but they shouldn't grieve with bitter despair and no hope as unbelievers do. We have hope today, even in the face of death. Revelation 14:13a "*And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.*" Psalms 116:15 "*Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints.*"

As Christians we can say as Job said at the incredible loss and suffering he endured, "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*" Are you today prepared to meet the Lord? In Amos 4 God gives evidence of warnings to Israel, of all that was done, plagues, suffering and droughts. Yet, in vs. 12 "*Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.*" Today is the day of salvation.

⁶ Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem, pp. 814

The "points" were drawn from the Systematic Theology book, commentary generally mine.