

The Christian's View of Death

By Everett Hardin

Death is a fact that cannot be denied and an event that cannot be avoided. We cannot determine when we shall go, but we can determine where we will go. The depth of our life is more important than the length of our life. Death to the Christian is a reunion of the soul with God the Father. Let us see what the death of a Christian really means.

A Divine Appointment

Mortal man cannot see into the future. He does not know the length of his stay here. *"It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment,"* Heb. 9:27. Death is inevitable for all, Gen. 3:19; Eccl. 12:7. It is common ground which the rich and poor, old and young, the educated and the illiterate, the sick and the well, must tread alike when it comes to them. In all the annals of time only two have not died, Enoch, Gen. 5:24, and Elijah, 2 Kings 2:11. Even of Job it was finally written, *"And Job died, being old and full of days,"* Job 41:17. This does not mean that from the viewpoint of our humanity we do not dread the ordeal of death and the breaking of human ties. But death is less fearful and more meaningful because it is the keeping of another appointment with God.

Death is A Departure

To the child of God death is a journey from this world to a place of bliss and happiness. From a Roman prison Paul wrote, *"For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand,"* 2 Tim. 4:6. Paul here was very near death, yet he could face it unafraid; he was ready to go. The word translated *"departure"* simply means "to unloose, undo again, break up." It was commonly used of a ship being loosed from its mooring, or an army striking camp by pulling up tents. Paul knew that something better awaits those who die in Christ. *"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ which is far better,"* Phil. 1:23. Death for the Christian is a departure from time to eternity, from earth to heaven, from ugliness to eternal beauty, from mortality to immortality. For this journey the Christian has made preparation and plans during his life upon earth.

Death Is A Release

The Christian longs for a new body which is from heaven. *"For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,"* 2 Cor. 5:1,2. In the eternal world God will give to each spirit a body even as it is fitted to wear. The death of a Christian means a change from a state of suffering and trial to a glorified state. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,"* I John 3:2. Rev. 21:4 portrays the eternal condition of the Lord's faithful. *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."* Death, grief, crying, and pain will be no more.

Death Is A Rest

We live in a restless age and we are a restless people. Yes, the word *"rest"* has tremendous appeal to us. The Christian will find death an entrance to a home where he is refreshed after his labor in this world. *"I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them,"* Rev. 14:13. The eternal rest which God's

people have to look forward to is a ready source of encouragement. Death to the Christian is the end of his labors upon the earth and the going home to receive his reward for a faithful life of service. Jesus offers man a *"peace that passeth understanding"* and a rest that is everlasting, Phil. 4:6-7; Mat. 11:28-30.

Death Is A Going Home

There is no reason to be anxious or concerned about the faithful children of God. They have the promise of a mansion prepared for them. Jesus said to troubled disciples, *"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there you may be also,"* John 14:1,2. Here Jesus speaks so tenderly that we scarcely realize that He is speaking of death. The Lord has gone to prepare a place for His disciples intending to return and receive them unto Himself that they be together forever in the Father's house. This promise is enough to give courage to the fearful, and comfort to the sorrowing. We can endure anything if at the end of life we can forever be with the Lord, I Thess. 4:17. Jesus was going to heaven to make reservations for all who faithfully serve Him.

To Die Is Gain

In Phil. 1:21 Paul described the life he was determined to live and the death he expected to realize. *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Death is gain to the man who is Christ-like. It is not gain for those who live for sensual enjoyment and worldly interests. To the Christian, death is gain in two counts: (1) On account of what it takes away, physical affliction, mental cares, moral and spiritual temptations; all that pains the body, deludes the judgement, saddens the heart, and deadens the conscience. (2) On account of what God promises to bestow upon the righteous.

The Dead Shall Live Again

Job asked, *"If a man die, shall he live again,"* Job 14:14. This question which Job asked has been pondered by men of every age. It is common to man that he searches, though blindly, for some ray of hope after death. God made man in His image; a little lower than the angels, Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8. Why would God make a creature like man and bestow upon him manifold blessings and then allow him to cease to exist forever? Job said, *"I shall see God,"* Job 19:25-26. David said, *"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,"* Ps. 23:6. Paul wrote, *"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,"* 2 Tim. 4:8. There is something about man that does not die. Moses and Elijah had been gone for 1400 and 700 years, but they appeared and talked with Jesus about His death, Matt. 17:1-5.

The Resurrection Of the Dead

Christ speaks of a general resurrection and judgment. *"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation,"* Jno. 5:28-29. Paul states that God will provide a resurrected body in accordance with the needs of the time. *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body,"* I Cor. 15:42-43. Paul also wrote, *"For our citizenship is in heaven, when also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things to himself,"* Phil. 3:20-23, ASV.

Death As the Lord Views It

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,” Psa. 116:15. This text is a challenging statement. It is paradoxical to common thinking. To man death is a tragedy. To God it is precious. God views the death of saints as a victorious runner, I Cor. 9:24-25, as a soldier that has conquered, 2 Tim. 4:7-8. Death rewards all the service of the life lived, 2 Cor. 5:10. Death is precious in God’s sight when it is the death of a saint. Each Christian is called a saint; hence the death of a Christian is precious in God’s sight. The statement is limited in character — *to saints alone!*

The Heavenly Home

John sees a triumphant multitude, in a heavenly state before the throne of God. *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands,”* Rev. 7:9. This is encouraging for it pictures those who have come out of *“great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,”* Rev. 7:14. There is an inheritance awaiting those who die in the Lord. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you,”* I Pet. 1:3-4. *“Wherefore beloved, seeing you look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot or blemish,”* I Peter 3:14.

True: “Others may destroy your reputation, but only you can destroy your character.”