



Death

FINALLY HOME

WOODROW KROLL

(2 Kings 20:1-3)

T

ears, sorrow, anguish, dread, fear: All of these words apply to death. Joy, freedom, healing, newness, eternity: For believers, these words as well apply to death. Loss hurts. Even Jesus wept at the death of a loved one (John 11:35). While we sorrow, however, we sorrow not as those who have no hope. Along with the tears and sorrow, believers know that death is only the end of life on earth and the beginning of life in heaven.

Death was not God's original desire for humanity. God created human beings for life, not death. Adam had received the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). It was not until Adam and Eve sinned that death arrived. God said that Adam's punishment for his sin would be as follows: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). Genesis 5:5 says, "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and *he died*" (italics mine). So began the cycle of birth and death that will continue until Christ returns. The apostle Paul explained it this way: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Death is difficult because it is loss—real and painful because loved ones are gone; symbolic because it reminds us of lost innocence, sin, and punishment. Death is a painful reality faced by every person. We lose people we love; we will one day die ourselves. How should believers view this dreaded event called death?

HOW SHOULD I VIEW DEATH?

Death is distasteful and dreaded; few would say they look forward to it. Death is viewed very differently from God's perspective, however. Humans see death as

something to be avoided as long as possible; God views it as something to be anticipated. Humans see death as a gloomy, dark night; God describes it as a glorious new day. Humans see death as the end of the journey; God sees it as the beginning of the best journey of all. Your perspective on death will dramatically affect your ability to handle it.

For Christians, the approach of death can be a time of positive anticipation because we enjoy God and long to be with Him forever. Like Abraham, we are looking for a city "whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Death is not a time to be feared or shunned; it is a time to anticipate hearing our Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25:21). Who would not anticipate that reception?

Death is not a dark, gloomy night, nor is it the end of everything. Instead, death is a door to a bright new future. It brings closure to one phase of life, but opens up an eternal phase that will be far better than humans can even imagine.

AM I PREPARED TO DIE?

Death is a reality. No one has found a cure for it. Sooner or later, therefore, all people have to face death. Each person must eventually ask the question, "Am I prepared to die?" The Bible is clear about how to pre-

pare for our eternal future. In fact, it is as simple as ABC. All people need to:

Admit that they are not ready to go to heaven when they die because they are sinners. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). All people have sinned; therefore, no one deserves to be in heaven with God for eternity. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Fortunately, God made a provision so that people can join Him in heaven. They must . . .

Believe that although they are sinners, Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for sin and save them from its punishment. Salvation is **not** a matter of turning over a new leaf or trying to live so that good works outweigh bad works. Salvation is the loving act of God whereby He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on Calvary's cross to pay sin's death penalty. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Those who believe this must then . . .

Confess to God that they believe what God's Word says, that they are sinners, and that they believe Jesus died to save them from sin and its penalty. The apostle Paul wrote, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

HOW WILL IT ALL END?

For Christians, physical pain and suffering may not be alleviated on earth, but it is only temporary. God has a glorious future for us because we have trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior, our Healer, our coming King. For the Christian, death is not the end. "O Death, where is your sting?" ex-claimed Paul. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57). Death is the doorway to our final destination—eternal

life with God in heaven. Then we will finally be home.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of death include:

- Psalm 116:15
- John 11:1-44
- Romans 6:23
- 1 Corinthians 15:12-58
- 2 Corinthians 5:8
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- Revelation 21; 22

Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on death at 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 on page 1514. See also the personality profile of Hezekiah on page 503.

MANASSEH REIGNS IN JUDAH

21 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ²And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. ³For he rebuilt the

high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image,^a as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven^b and served them. ⁴He also built altars

^{21:3} ^aHebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess

^bThe gods of the Assyrians

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Death

THE UNWELCOME VISITOR

(2 KINGS 20:1-3)

Death happens to everyone, and no one escapes it this side of the Lord's return. The Bible records just two men, Enoch and Elijah, who were allowed to arrive in heaven without passing through this dreadful portal. Everyone else eventually meets that unwelcome visitor, even as the Son of God Himself did.

One day death knocked on King Hezekiah's door. He was a good and godly king who ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah. After the evil reign of Ahaz, the new king Hezekiah cleaned house—literally. He tore down pagan altars and “trusted in the LORD God of Israel” (2 Kin. 18:5). When the Assyrians attacked the nation, Hezekiah went to the temple and prayed for God's deliverance. God miraculously intervened, killing most of the enemy army and sending their king scurrying home, where he was assassinated. Judah was safe for a while.

But then Hezekiah became very ill, and Isaiah arrived to tell him to set his house in order because he would soon die. Hezekiah reacted predictably—he “wept bitterly” (20:3) and pleaded with God for his life. And God answered, giving Hezekiah fifteen more years.

Believers know that the joys of heaven are on the other side of death's door, but we still cling to this life. What person has not, upon receiving news of impending death, wept bitterly to God? Many have stories of God's mercy and healing. But even those who have died could tell us stories of healing—ultimate healing upon seeing the face of their Lord!

The greatest fear is the unknown. We know of heaven, but we don't understand it. We prepare for death by faith, knowing we must go through the door alone. But believers have the truth that God who knows and loves them is on the other side, waiting with open arms. For believers, death is not the end—it is the beginning of eternity with God.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about death on pages 500, 501. See also the key passage note at 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 on page 1514.

SOUL NOTE



Doctor's Orders (20:7) God promised to heal Hezekiah. He could have intervened miraculously; He could have sent Isaiah to touch and heal him. Instead, God sent Isaiah with a prescription. The phrase, “Take a lump of figs,” probably referred to a poultice that would relieve the boil. When we are ill, we should seek healing. God may intervene miraculously, or He may send doctors and medicines. In either case, He is ultimately in control to heal His people or to bring them home to Him.

Topic: Health/Spirituality

grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me*. ¹¹Therefore, whether *it was I* or they, so we preach and so you believed.

THE RISEN CHRIST, OUR HOPE

¹²Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶For if *the dead do not rise*, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED

²⁰But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in

Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶The last enemy *that will be destroyed is death*. ²⁷For "*He has put all things under His feet*."^a But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

EFFECTS OF DENYING THE RESURRECTION

²⁹Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? ³⁰And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? ³¹I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. ³²If in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it to me*? If *the dead do not rise*, "*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!*"^a

³³Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." ³⁴Awake to righteousness.

15:27 ^aPsalms 8:6 15:32 ^aIsaiah 22:13



Death

KEY PASSAGE

THE LAST ENEMY

(15:20-22)

Death entered the world because of sin. When Adam sinned, death came to all human beings. As Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). One man, Adam, caused sin to enter the human race, and so death from sin. And one Man, Jesus, brought the promise of resurrection from the dead. He accomplished this by becoming human, dying, and then rising again.

Someday in God's new creation, death itself will be destroyed: "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). Until then, all human beings will die, but for believers, death is not to be feared, for it is a gateway to eternal life with God. First-century believers were persecuted for their faith and faced death continually. Like them, we must always be ready to die, ready to stand before God, and ready to thank Him for all He has done in giving us salvation.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about death on pages 500, 501. See also the personality profile of Hezekiah on page 503.

SOLOMON IS BORN

²⁴Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he^a called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, ²⁵and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he^a called his name Jedidiah,^b because of the LORD.

RABBAH IS CAPTURED

²⁶Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. ²⁷And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water supply." ²⁸Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name." ²⁹So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it. ³⁰Then he took their king's crown from his head. Its weight was a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was set on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance. ³¹And he brought out the people who were in it, and put them to work with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

AMNON AND TAMAR

13 After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. ²Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. ³But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab was a very

crafty man. ⁴And he said to him, "Why are you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?"

Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

⁵So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" ⁶Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

⁷And David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Now go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." ⁸So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹And she took the pan and placed them out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, "Have everyone go out from me." And they all went out from him. ¹⁰Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them to Amnon her brother in the bedroom. ¹¹Now when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."

¹²But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be

12:24 ^aFollowing Kethib, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Qere, a few Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Targum read *she*. **12:25** ^aQere, some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Targum read *she*.

^bLiterally *Beloved of the LORD*

SOUL NOTE



Eternal Hope (12:23) After the death of David and Bathsheba's first son, David's only consolation was that eventually he would "go to him." While the child was alive, David had begged God to spare his life. When the child died, however, David was confident that the boy was with God and he would see him again. Christian parents who have faced the devastation of the death of a young child can take hope in David's faith that God will bring the little ones to Himself. **Topic: Death**

GOD JUDGES AHAZIAH

1 Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

²Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury." ³But the angel^a of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because *there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?*'" ⁴Now therefore, thus says the LORD: 'You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " So Elijah departed.

⁵And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, "Why have you come back?"

⁶So they said to him, "A man came up to meet us, and said to us, 'Go, return to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Is it because *there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?* Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " " "

⁷Then he said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?"

⁸So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist."

And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

⁹Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him: "Man of God, the king has said, 'Come down!'"

¹⁰So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, "If I *am* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from

heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹¹Then he sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men.

And he answered and said to him: "Man of God, thus has the king said, 'Come down quickly!'"

¹²So Elijah answered and said to them, "If I *am* a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹³Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight." ¹⁴Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight."

¹⁵And the angel^a of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king. ¹⁶Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, *is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word?* Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' "

¹⁷So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. Because he had no son, Jehoram^a became king in his place, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

¹⁸Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

1:3 ^aOr Angel 1:15 ^aOr Angel 1:17 ^aThe son of Ahab king of Israel (compare 3:1)



Facing Mortality (1:6) King Ahaziah feared that he might not recover from a serious injury. He sent messengers to "inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron" whether he would live or die. People most often do not want to face their own mortality. In Ahaziah's case, he sought help from a false god instead of turning to the Lord. People facing death often come to grips with the reality of their need for a relationship with God. Be ready to share your faith with those who are looking for answers in a time of great need. **Topic: Death**

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Gilgal. "I please, if

But El your son went down

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- 28 For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
- 29 All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
- 30 A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the
next generation,
- 31 They will come and declare His
righteousness to a people who will
be born,
That He has done *this*.

PSALM 23

THE LORD THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

A Psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
- 2 He makes me to lie
down in green
pastures;
He leads me beside
the still waters.
- 3 He restores my
soul;
He leads me in the paths of
righteousness
For His name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort
me.

The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

PSALM 23:1

- 5 You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell^a in the house of the LORD
Forever.

PSALM 24

THE KING OF GLORY AND HIS KINGDOM

A Psalm of David.

- 1 The earth is the LORD's, and all its
fullness,
The world and those who dwell therein.
- 2 For He has founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the waters.
- 3 Who may ascend into the hill of the
LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
- 4 He who has clean
hands and a
pure heart,
Who has not lifted
up his soul to
an idol,
Nor sworn
deceitfully.
- 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his
salvation.
- 6 This is Jacob, the generation of those
who seek Him,
Who seek Your face. Selah

23:6 ^aFollowing Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and
Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *return*.

SOUL NOTE



The Gateway (ch. 23) This chapter expresses confidence in God in the face of death. Even death cannot separate believers from God, for in Him death is not the end, but a gateway to eternal life. Even though we may be walking through "the valley of the shadow of death" (23:4), we need not fear. God's goodness and mercy embrace us every step of the way. The threshold of death brings sorrow, but sorrow transforms to hope. Believers can face death without fear because God is there to greet them. **Topic: Death**

- ¹⁰ I believed, therefore I spoke,
 "I am greatly afflicted."
 I said in my haste,
 "All men *are* liars."
- ¹² What shall I render to the LORD
 For all His benefits toward me?
- ¹³ I will take up the cup of salvation,
 And call upon the name of the LORD.
- ¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the LORD
 Now in the presence of all His people.
- ¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD
 Is the death of His saints.
- O LORD, truly I *am* Your servant;
 I *am* Your servant, the son of Your
 maidservant;
 You have loosed my bonds.
- ¹⁷ I will offer to You the sacrifice of
 thanksgiving,
 And will call upon the name of the
 LORD.
- ¹⁸ I will pay my vows to the LORD
 Now in the presence of all His people,
- ¹⁹ In the courts of the LORD's house,
 In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 117

LET ALL PEOPLES PRAISE THE LORD

Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!
 Laud Him, all you peoples!
 For His merciful kindness is great toward
 us,
 And the truth of the LORD *endures*
 forever.

Praise the LORD!

PSALM 118

PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS EVERLASTING MERCY

- ¹ Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He* is
 good!
 For His mercy *endures* forever.
- Let Israel now say,
 "His mercy *endures* forever."
 Let the house of Aaron now say,
 "His mercy *endures* forever."
 Let those who fear the LORD now say,
 "His mercy *endures* forever."
- I called on the LORD in distress;
 The LORD answered me *and set me* in a
 broad place.
- ⁶ The LORD *is* on my side;
 I will not fear.
 What can man do to me?
- ⁷ The LORD *is* for me among those who
 help me;
 Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those
 who hate me.
It is better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man.
It is better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.

- ¹⁰ All nations surrounded me,
 But in the name of the LORD I will
 destroy them.
- ¹¹ They surrounded me,
 Yes, they surrounded me;
 But in the name of the LORD I will
 destroy them.
- ¹² They surrounded me like bees;
They were quenched like a fire of thorns;
 For in the name of the LORD I will
 destroy them.
- ¹³ You pushed me violently, that I might
 fall,
 But the LORD helped me.

SOUL NOTE



True Home (116:15) Death is real—everyone must die. For most, death is a great tragedy. It is sad when loved ones die, and it is natural to grieve. But God says that the death of a believer is "precious in the sight of the LORD." For believers, death is merely a gateway into the home in heaven where they ultimately belong. The time on this earth is a pilgrimage through a strange land. Through death, believers enter their true eternal home—heaven. **Topic: Death**

For You have done wonderful *things*;
Your counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and*
truth.

² For You have made a city a ruin,
A fortified city a ruin,
A palace of foreigners to be a city no
more;
It will never be rebuilt.
Therefore the strong people will glorify
You;
The city of the terrible nations will fear
You.

For You have been a strength to the
poor,
A strength to the needy in his distress,
A refuge from the storm,
A shade from the heat;
For the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a
storm *against* the wall.
You will reduce the noise of aliens,
As heat in a dry place;
As heat in the shadow of a cloud,
The song of the terrible ones will be
diminished.

And in this mountain
The LORD of hosts will make for all
people

A feast of choice pieces,
A feast of wines on the lees,
Of fat things full of marrow,
Of well-refined wines on the lees.

⁷ And He will destroy on this
mountain
The surface of the covering cast over all
people,
And the veil that is spread over all
nations.

⁸ He will swallow up death forever,
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears
from all faces;
The rebuke of His people

He will take away from all the earth;
For the LORD has spoken.

And it will be said in that day:
"Behold, *this is* our God;
We have waited for Him, and He will
save us.
This is the LORD;
We have waited for Him;
We will be glad and rejoice in His
salvation."

¹⁰ For on this mountain the hand of the
LORD will rest,
And Moab shall be trampled down
under Him,
As straw is trampled down for the refuse
heap.

¹¹ And He will spread out His hands in
their midst
As a swimmer reaches out to swim,
And He will bring down their pride
Together with the trickery of their hands.

¹² The fortress of the high fort of your
walls
He will bring down, lay low,
And bring to the ground, down to the
dust.

A SONG OF SALVATION

26 In that day this song will be sung in
the land of Judah:

"We have a strong city;
God will appoint salvation *for* walls and
bulwarks.

Open the gates,
That the righteous nation which keeps
the truth may enter in.

³ You will keep *him* in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.



SOUL NOTE

Final Victory (25:8) Death is humanity's enemy. People fear death and the sorrow it brings. This is the first prophecy of the destruction of death and grief. In Christ's death, the curse and power of death were destroyed forever. Believers have the promise of new life now and eternal life with God. Isaiah writes that "the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces." In Revelation, John describes the same picture: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. . . . There shall be no more pain" (Rev. 21:4). For believers, death is the gateway to eternal life. **Topic: Death**

BE RECONCILED TO GOD

¹²For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, *it is for God*; or if we are of sound mind, *it is for you*. ¹⁴For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

¹⁶Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone *is in Christ*, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled

to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be sin for us*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

MARKS OF THE MINISTRY

6 We then, as workers together with Him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For He says:

"In an acceptable time I have heard you. And in the day of salvation I have helped you."^a

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

³We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. ⁴But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, ⁵in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings, ⁶by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, ⁷by the word of truth, by the power of God, in the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸by honor and dishonor, by

6:2 ^aIsaiah 49:8



SOUL NOTE

Present with the Lord (5:6-8) Exactly what happens after someone dies? The Bible doesn't go into much detail, but it does say that believers who die—that is, are "absent from the body"—will be "present with the Lord" (see also Phil.

1:23). They will experience a state of blessedness with God. When Christ returns, the believers who have died will be raised and the living believers will be changed, and all will receive glorified, eternal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:16-18). God has promised that His people will be with Him forever. Death is a defeated enemy. Christ has bought eternal life. We can take hope in God's sure promise. **Topic: Death**



SOUL NOTE

A Rewarding Wait (5:10) A future judgment will finalize the destiny of all who have not known Christ (Rev. 20:11-15). Believers will not need to fear this judgment, for they will have been guaranteed salvation and eternal life in heaven.

However, the saved do have a judgment awaiting them that will determine their rewards. At this judgment, Christians will account for how they have lived and served, and how well they have used their gifts for the sake of the gospel. If you had to stand before the Lord this very day, what would you say? God holds us accountable. **Topic: Accountability**

try. ¹²And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.

¹⁴Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. ¹⁵You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

¹⁶At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

THE LORD IS FAITHFUL

¹⁷But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸And the Lord will

deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!

COME BEFORE WINTER

¹⁹Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

²¹Do your utmost to come before winter.

Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

FAREWELL

²²The Lord Jesus Christ^a be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

4:22 ^aNU-Text omits *Jesus Christ*.

SOUL NOTE



Ready to Go (4:6–8) Paul knew that he would soon die, yet he was not fearful or worried for his ministry or for himself. He knew that others would faithfully carry on the task of spreading the gospel message. He knew that he was on his way to glory in heaven and a crown of righteousness. He knew that his job was done, and it was time to go. Believers can face death with confidence, knowing that God is waiting for them. May we all be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." **Topic: Death**

THE PROCLAMATIONS OF THREE ANGELS

⁶Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

⁸And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon^a is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

⁹Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

¹²Here is the patience of the saints; here are those^a who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

¹³Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,^a “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

REAPING THE EARTH'S HARVEST

¹⁴Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵And another angel came

out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You^a to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” ¹⁶So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

REAPING THE GRAPES OF WRATH

¹⁷Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

¹⁸And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.” ¹⁹So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

PRELUDE TO THE BOWL JUDGMENTS

15 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

²And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark^a and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of

14:8 ^aNU-Text reads *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, which has made*; M-Text reads *Babylon the great is fallen. She has made*. **14:12** ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *here are those*. **14:13** ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *to me*. **14:15** ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *for You*. **15:2** ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *over his mark*.

SOUL NOTE



What Truly Matters (14:13) This chapter paints a picture of stark contrasts. On one side, there is a joyful choir of people accompanying the victorious Christ up Mount Zion. On the other side stand those who have followed the beast into immorality, worshiped his image, and accepted his mark on their foreheads. Two destinies are contrasted—eternal life with God or eternal life without God. At the end, no last-minute changes will be possible. Where will you be for eternity? With Jesus or without Him? **Topic: Death**