

26 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING!

QUESTION #25: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE?

Q. What happens when I die?

A. When a Christian dies, their soul goes home; home to their Saviour, to their believing loved ones who have gone before. They are in the presence of the most glorious, loving, merciful Father and united with Him and all other believers who have passed on, and finally free of all sin, sickness and frailty. When unbelievers die, they immediately enter fearful, eternal punishment.

WHY DO CHRISTIANS DIE?

1. DEATH IS NOT PUNISHMENT FOR CHRISTIANS, BUT A RESULT OF LIVING IN A FALLEN WORLD.

Death is part of God's punishing for sins, so if that were it's only function, Christians would never die. But death is also a result of living in a fallen world, and is the last aspect of that world to be removed.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom 8:1)

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (2 Cor 15:26)

2. GOD USES DEATH TO COMPLETE OUR SANCTIFICATION AND COMPLETE OUR UNION WITH CHRIST.

The aging, weakness and sometimes sickness leading up to death is part of the discipline that God allows us to go through that we might become more like Christ. Our union with Christ includes our experiencing death, as he also died. By valuing obedience more than preserving our lives, we honour the Lord.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28)

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.. (Phil 3:8b,10-11)

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Rev 12:11)

HOW SHOULD WE THINK OF OUR OWN DEATH AND OTHERS?

1. OUR OWN DEATH SHOULD NOT BRING FEAR BUT JOY.

We are going home to be with Christ. And our lack of fear is a clear testimony in an age that tries to avoid talking about death and has no answer for it.

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Cor 5:8)

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. (Phil 1:23)

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" (Rev 14:13)

2. DEATH OF OTHER CHRISTIANS BRINGS SORROW BUT ALSO HOPE AND JOY.

It is not wrong to express real sorrow at the temporary loss of fellowship with loved ones who have died, and sorrow for the suffering they may have gone through prior to death.

Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. (Acts 8:2)

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (1 Thess 4:13)

Our mourning should be mixed with worship of God, thanksgiving for the life of the loved one, and hope and joy in that they have gone to be with the Lord.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thess 4:14-18)

3. DEATH OF UNBELIEVERS BRINGS SORROW.

There is no hope for those who die unbelieving, but we also often do not have absolute certainty that a person persisted in their unbelief. Perhaps in their dying times, God brought back to mind previously heard words of Scripture that may have brought the person to genuine repentance and faith. We can speak in thankfulness for the good qualities that we have been encouraged by in the person who has died.

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (Rom 9:1-3)

“You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.” (2 Sam 1:24)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE?

1. SOULS OF BELIEVERS GO IMMEDIATELY INTO GOD'S PRESENCE.

We temporarily cease bodily life and have the separation of the soul from the body, with the soul immediately in God's presence. Neither “purgatory” nor “soul sleep” are taught in the Bible. One day our souls and resurrected and glorified bodies will be reunited.

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Cor 5:8)

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:19)

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29)

2. SOULS OF UNBELIEVERS GO IMMEDIATELY INTO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

The souls of unbelievers go into unending, conscious punishment and are not annihilated. One day their souls and resurrected bodies will be reunited, and the final judgment rendered that casts them into the lake of fire.

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt 25:41)