

Chapter 41: Death and the Intermediate State

What is the purpose of death in the Christian life?
What happens to our bodies and souls when we die?

A) Why do Christians die?

- 1) Death is not a punishment for Christians. All the penalty for our sins has been paid. (Rom. 8:1)
- 2) Death is the final outcome of living in a fallen world. The last aspect of a fallen world to be removed will be death (1 Cor. 15:26, 54-55)
- 3) God uses the experience of aging and death to complete our sanctification (Rom. 8:28, Heb. 2:10, Heb. 12:6, 10-11, Heb. 5:8, Rev. 2:10, Phil. 1:20).
- 4) Our experience of death completes our union with Christ. (Rom. 8:17, 1 Peter 4:13, 1 Peter 2:21)
- 5) Our obedience to God is more important than preserving our own lives. (Acts 20: 24, Acts 21:13, 2 Cor. 11:23-27, 2 Tim. 4:6-7, Rev. 12:11)

B) How should we think of our own death and the death of others?

- 1) Our own death: not with fear but with joy at the prospect of going to be with Christ. (2 Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:22-23, Rev. 14:13; Heb. 2:15, Rom. 8:38-39)
- 2) The death of Christian friends and relatives: sorrow, but mixed with joy. (Acts 8:2, 20:37-38; John 11:35, Phil. 2:27, 2 Sam. 1:11-27, 1 Thess. 4:13, 5:10; Ps. 116:15; 2 Sam. 12:20; Job 1:20-21)
- 3) The death of unbelievers: but not mixed with the joy of assurance of salvation (Rom. 9:1-3, 2 Sam. 1:19-25).

-- But we often do not have absolute certainty that a person has persisted in refusal to trust Christ all the way to the point of death. The knowledge of one's impending death often will bring about genuine heart searching on the part of the dying person.

-- Nevertheless, after a non-Christian has died, it would be wrong to indicate to others that we think that person has gone to heaven. This would give misleading information and false assurance and diminish the urgency for those remaining to trust Christ.

-- It is often helpful to recall the good qualities that you remember about the person's life: 2 Sam 1:19-25

C) What happens when people die?

- 1) The souls of believers go immediately into God's presence. (2 Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:23, Luke 23:43, Heb. 12:1, 22-24)
 - i. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of Purgatory. In Roman Catholic teaching, Purgatory is the place where the souls of believers go to be further purified from sin until they are ready to be admitted into heaven. (supported from 2 Maccabees 12:42-45; also Matt. 12:32; 1 Cor. 3:15)
 - ii. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of "soul sleep." A metaphorical expression is used in these verses to teach that death is temporary. (Matt. 9:24, 24:52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60, 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 5:10).
 - iii. Did OT believers enter immediately into God's presence? Yes, I think so: Gen. 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11, Ps. 23:6, Matt. 22:32, Luke 16:25
 - iv. Should we pray for the dead? No. To pray for the dead is simply to pray for something that God has told us has already been decided.

- 2) The souls of unbelievers go immediately to eternal punishment (Matt. 25: 41, 46; Luke 16:24-26; John 3:18; Heb 9:27; Rev. 14:11, 20:10).
 - i. Scripture never represents final judgment as depending on anything done after we die, but only on what has happened in this life (Matt. 25:31-46, Rom. 2:5-10).
 - ii. Unbelievers await final judgment (Matt. 25: 31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:12, 15)

To order CD's e-mail Trent Poling ctpoling@msn.com or talk to Trent in the sound booth before or after class. Trent also has electronic copies of these outlines starting in about June, 2005, and the outlines are posted on the web site www.christianessentialsbc.com

For interesting hymn information: see Robert Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul: 300 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories* (Nashville: Thos. Nelson, 2006)