

## QUESTIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH

### *1 Corinthians 15:54-57*

#### INTRODUCTION

- A. We can fool ourselves into ignoring the important questions of life – until it is time to face death.
  - 1. We can live any way we please – until a brush with death makes us reevaluate.
  - 2. We can curse God and deny Him and ignore Him – until we lay on our death bed and stare Him in the face.
- B. Death is a judge who questions the worthiness of our lives.
  - 1. It is a litmus test, indicating the quality of the way we have lived.
  - 2. Death is a knife that divides the world:
    - a. The fearful and the unafraid.
    - b. The remorseful and those at peace.
    - c. The angry and the accepting.
    - d. The hopeless and the hopeful.
  - 3. Death separates the men from the boys.
- C. Listen to the differences in dying:
  - 1. Voltaire, French philosopher, most of life fighting Christianity, “I am abandoned by God and man: I shall go to hell!”
  - 2. Gabriel Mirabeau (French revolutionary and politician), “Give me more laudanum, that I may not think of eternity.”
  - 3. Thomas Carlyle (Scottish philosopher), “I am as good as without hope, a sad old man gazing into the final chasm.”
  - 4. George Washington, man of great faith, “Doctor, I am dying, but I am not afraid to die. Father of mercies, take me unto Thyself.”
  - 5. Sir David Brewster (inventor of kaleidoscope), “I will see Jesus: I shall see Him as He is. I have had the light for many years. Oh, how bright it is! I feel so safe and satisfied.”
- D. Ecclesiastes is a book written by a man facing death.
  - 1. Solomon is old by the time he writes this book.
  - 2. He sees all too clearly that his time is short.
  - 3. The Preacher’s aim is to instruct his audience, “how to live in the world as it really is, instead of living in the world with false hope.”
  - 4. Because man dies, nothing in life means very much at all.

#### I. SOLOMON’S SEARCH FOR THE FULL LIFE.

- A. Wisdom.
  - 1. Solomon begins his search by turning to wisdom.
    - a. Eccl. 2:12-14a
    - b. There is a value in wisdom. On the surface, wisdom is better than folly.
    - c. Proverbs is a book written in praise of wisdom. Written in Solomon’s younger years, Proverbs exalts wisdom as the highest good for which man can strive.
  - 2. He turns away when discovering that wise or foolish, death will win out in the end.
    - a. The older Solomon becomes, the more the value of wisdom fades.
    - b. Eccl. 2:14b-16.
    - c. Death spoils wisdom for Solomon. What’s the use of being so wise if you end up the same way as the fool.
  - 3. That is the sting of death.

- B. Work.
  - 1. Solomon turns next to work.
    - a. Eccl. 2:4-6
    - b. Again, during the years when Solomon was not thinking about death, he derived great pleasure from his work.
  - 2. As he becomes more obsessed with the grave, however, he grows disillusioned with the drive to succeed, realizing that no accomplishment, no matter how great, keeps you from death.
    - a. Eccl. 2:17-21
    - b. The hard worker spends his life building only to have someone else reap the rewards of his labor.
  - 3. That is the sting of death.
- C. Wealth.
  - 1. Finally, Solomon looks at possessions:
    - a. Eccl. 2:7-10a
    - b. He says elsewhere: *“Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and [but] money is the answer for everything”*, Eccl. 10:19.
  - 2. You can’t take it with you.
    - a. Eccl. 5:15-16
    - b. As he faces his own death, Solomon realizes that all the wealth in the world cannot buy off the grave. Every dead man is a pauper.
  - 3. That is the sting of death.

## II. SOLOMON’S CONCLUSIONS ON LIFE AND DEATH.

- A. Death is the Common Destiny of All, Eccl. 9:2.
  - 1. This idea is repeated throughout Ecclesiastes: 2:14-16; 3:19-21; 6:6; 7:2.
  - 2. What you are really doesn’t matter. What you do doesn’t make any difference. What you own is unimportant. In the end, death makes all men equal.
- B. Death is the Great Evil, Eccl. 9:3-6.
  - 1. *“This is an evil in everything...”*, Eccl. 9:3.
    - a. Death is the great evil in life.
      - i. The fact that all men die shows the fundamental unfairness of life.
      - ii. That unfairness proves that life is vanity.
  - 2. As bad as life is, it is better than death (9:4-6).
    - a. At least there is hope for the living.
    - b. The dead know nothing and are unknown.
    - c. They feel and participate in nothing.
- C. Enjoy Life While You Can, Eccl. 9:7-10.
  - 1. Eat, drink and be merry.
    - a. Eccl. 9:7-9a
    - b. All this sounds fine, until you understand that Solomon is not here giving a prescription for happiness but for escape.
  - 2. Life is a sham – the thoughtless person may be able to eat, drink and enjoy. The thoughtful person realizes that its all meaningless.
    - a. Eccl. 9:9-10
    - b. Even enjoyment is meaningless because the knowledge that it will soon end makes it “toilsome labor.”
- D. Death: The Great Equalizer, Eccl. 9:11-12.
  - 1. Life is a game of chance – you can’t influence the roll of the dice.
  - 2. Death comes unexpectedly.

### III. THE STING OF DEATH.

- A. Dealing with Death is as Important as Dealing with Life.
  - 1. Most of us spend all our time trying to live full lives.
  - 2. Perhaps we would live better if we thought more about dying.
    - a. Dying tends to put living in perspective.
    - b. Knowing death is coming puts a different slant on the way we would live.
    - c. In many ways, learning to die answers most questions about how we should live.
- B. Jesus and the Constant Awareness of Death.
  - 1. Jesus lived with the knowledge of His death.
    - a. From the start of His ministry, He foresaw the cross.
    - b. His understanding of death defined the way He lived.
  - 2. Perhaps that is why so much of His teaching centered on helping His disciples deal with death.
    - a. *"Take up your cross and follow me." Mt. 16:24*
    - b. *"He who loses his life will find it." Mt. 16:25*
  - 3. The parable of the wise and foolish builders.
    - a. Matthew 7:24-27
    - b. It is vital to know that foundations of our lives will be tested.
      - i. Be careful how you build your life.
      - ii. It is the storm that tests the quality of a house, not its comfort level.
- C. In Christ, Death No Longer has its Sting.
  - 1. Hebrews 2:14-15
    - a. Slavery to death – the story of Solomon.
    - b. Delivery from fear – the story of the Christian.
    - c. 1 Corinthians 15:54b-55 – nothing to fear!
  - 2. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
    - a. "Those who have no hope" – the story of Solomon.
    - b. The faith of the Christian that gives victory:
      - i. Christ conquered death.
      - ii. Christ will conquer our deaths.
      - iii. We have hope, **1 Cor. 15:58.**

***Face to Face with Christ my Savior***

### CLOSING

- A. Live like today was the last day of your life.
  - 1. Not an excuse for letting go of faith.
  - 2. Rather, a prescription for holding onto faith.
  - 3. ***I Know that My Redeemer Lives!***