

The Last Enemy

Ekkehardt Mueller

Although some obituaries claim that God has taken a loved one into a better world, others do not reflect any hope. Nevertheless, all of them remind us that one day it will be our turn.

A kind of obituary is found in 1Cor 15:3-8. It contains four statements: (1) Christ has died; (2) Christ was buried; (3) Christ arose from the dead; and (4) Christ appeared to different persons. Jesus Christ, our Creator and Savior knows exactly what is going on when humans die. In addition he has experienced death himself, and through the Bible he can give us important information about this topic.

I. The Cause of Death

- Gen 2:17 - God's statement: The possibility that death may become a reality is introduced.
Gen 3:4 - Satan's statement: Immortality is part of humanity.
After the fall the possibility of death became a bitter reality affecting all human beings--Rom 6:23.

II. The State of Death

1. Death in the Old Testament

- Gen 2:7 - God gave life to the body that he shaped from the dust of the ground and that up to that time was without life (dust + life=a living being). If God withdraws life, the former state--earth, dust--is found again (cf. Eccl 3:19, 20).
Eccl 9:5, 6, 10 - In death there is no activity. The deceased have no consciousness.
Dan 12:2, 13 - Death is compared to sleep which seems to imply: (1) It is a state of unconsciousness. The dead are "sleeping" in the earth. (2) There will be an awakening.

2. Death and Jesus

- 1Cor 15:3, 4, 20 - Jesus is called the first fruit or the first of those who are asleep. As such, Jesus also "slept" when He was dead. After His crucifixion He did not go directly to the Father but rested in the tomb until His resurrection (John 20:17).

3. Death in the New Testament

- John 5:28, 29 - The dead are in the grave.
Acts 2:29, 34 - David, a man after God's heart (Act 13:22), rests in the tomb and is not with God.
John 7:33, 34; 13:33 - Where Jesus is, His disciples cannot come immediately.

The OT, the NT, as well as Jesus' own experience suggest that death is an unconscious state called sleep (see also John 11).

III. And After Death

- 1Cor 15:42-44 - There is a resurrection. Believers will receive a new body. However, we have no detailed information what this body will be like. Someone has compared the old body to coal and the new body to a marvelous diamond. Both consist of carbon, and yet they are so different from each other.
1Cor 15:22-23 - A child of God expects the resurrection.
John 14:1-3 - Jesus has prepared dwelling places for his people that they will inhabit after His Second Coming.

Rev 21:4 - Finally, death will be done away with. Death will be the end only if my life does not belong to God.

IV. Preparation

Ps 90:12 - We are preparing. We get our priorities straight. Important things must remain important.

In ancient Thessalonica two inscriptions were found which obviously come from the same period. One says: "No hope." The other one reads: "Christ is my life." Two inscriptions and two different philosophies of life, resignation and assurance. What about your life?

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