***The Doctrine of Death, No. 1  
  
RV120-02***

We are looking at the fourth seal. This is the second segment found in Revelation 6:7-8.

**Eastern Mysticism**

Humanity all over the world today is opposed to the Creator God and His revelation, the Bible. We who recognize that living Creator God, and accept His authority, and we who accept the Bible as the inerrant record from that God, are a very small minority in the mass of humanity today. The eastern mysticism of Hinduism and all of its offshoots are promising godhood to man himself. That's a very exciting idea. That is a heady thing – to imagine that you as a human being are actually progressing and evolving toward godhood.

**Mormonism**

For those of us who are biblical Christians, we tend to pass that off as utter, ridiculous nonsense, and don't give it a second thought. But that is a great mistake. You must understand that the power of the thinking of Hinduism; the Eastern mystical concept of deity in all of us; and, that there is a universal mind, is at the heart of what people think today. In the course of Satan's actions, he has raised what is becoming one of the most powerful groups in the world today in the form of Mormonism, which comes under the title of Christianity. And at the heart of all Mormon doctrine, the bottom line is that you are progressing to becoming a God. That is a thing that somehow slips by us.

Several years ago, I had a group of academy mothers who were Mormons who came to speak to me. In the process of their speaking to me about a problem that they had, they expressed the fact that they were all looking forward someday to being goddesses on another planet with their husband gods ruling over their own worlds. Somehow I had never really grabbed hold of the realization that that is what is at the heart of the mystical thinking that possesses the minds of college youth today: We're all becoming gods. And the prime objective then of Eastern mysticism and its expression in Mormonism is that there is a special revelation which declares that the ultimate goal of every human being is to become a God.

**We Don't Become Gods**

So, this is the way you must understand that people think. This is the way you must look out upon the world that we're in, and why that world rejects the Bible. If there's anything that is clear in the Bible, it is that Eve, when she accepted that idea, made a very grave mistake. She was seriously in error when she accepted Satan's offer to become a goddess. Desiring to be God has actually turned God's most beautiful and smartest angel, Lucifer, into an arrogant, corrupt, vile beast. It is a vain ambition for Satan to try to become a God. It is a vain ambition for man to try to become a God. Satan has always led mankind in rebellion against God and His Word, the Bible. Satan promises that man himself can be Lord of the earth instead of God. That's the lie that he told to Eve. The Bible, therefore is minimized; it's treated with indifference; and, it's replaced by newer revelations from God to update Scripture.

For example, take a group like the Mormons. Their doctrine is very confusing and contradictory. You would think that if you point that out to a Mormon that that will cause him to stop short and realize the error of what he is believing. But that's not true. As those of you who toured the Salt Lake City temple have undoubtedly heard the guides say, "The latest revelation that God has for us today comes from down the street here in our main office building on the 28h floor where our prophet revelator and seer lives and communicates God's thinking for us for this day. And they speak of it in hushed, awed tones, and they are very proud of the fact that they are one religious group who has direct new communication from God.

So, the leaders of the Mormon Church say, "It doesn't matter what the Bible says. The latest communication from God can contradict it. It doesn't even matter with Mormon says. As a matter of fact, it doesn't matter what our founder Joseph Smith says. If our newest president, our newest prophet, speaks for God, he can contradict anything in the past. It's the latest thinking of God."

So, I discovered something when I spoke to these mothers and said, "The problem that you have with your beliefs (and that's what they were talking to me about – beliefs), is that it is contradictory of previous revelation, and God is always consistent. But to them, that was no problem because their new prophet can give them the latest information. That's why it makes sense to have the ambition to become a God, because the newest revelation that they had since the Bible was written has told them that every one of them, if they live a worthy life, will themselves become gods.

So, here is Satan's variation of the technique – that man can discard the authority of the Word of God, and he can become his own lord, and reject the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's attempt to run the earth without subjection to God's laws, however, is going to result in the tribulation era under the dictatorship of the antichrist. With all the born again Christians removed from the earth at that time, it would seem that the tribulation unbelievers would quickly be able to realize their dream of a humanistic utopia. Instead, we find from the Word of God, and the seals that we have been studying, that mankind will go really from one disaster to the next, and social order will collapse in a blind rage against the God who will be demonstrating His Lordship, in spite of man's arrogance. As Lord of the earth, man will be a pathetic failure. Some probably will secretly wish that the Christians were back there again, holding things in check.

**The First Three Seals**

The apostle John is viewing this future pathetic attempt of puny man to take over from God, and try to live by man's laws instead of God's law. The result he sees in his vision is a crisis during the first three-and-a-half years of the tribulation era, which is symbolized by a series of seals. The first four seals deal with four horsemen who appear to John, and they give us some information about the early days of the tribulation era. First came the white horse, signifying an uneasy peace between the nations established by the antichrist. Second was the red horse, signifying the outbreak of widespread bloodshed – homicide on a wide scale. The black horse came next, signifying inflation and the scarcity of food.

**The Pale Horse**

Now we have come to the pale horse, which signifies widespread death covering the planet. The word "pale" here signifies the ashen gray color of a dead person. The name of the rider is given to us as "death," bringing fear and desperation to mankind who is trying to escape that ultimate doom.

**Death and Hades**

As the death horse rider passes through mankind, he is followed by Hades. Hades, we learned, is the abode of the unsaved dead today. So, the population of the antichrist's kingdom is shown to go from physical death to eternal, spiritual death. They go directly from physical death on the earth to Hades, which is the abode of those who are unbelievers, and thus destined for eternal spiritual death. Hades, as we found, before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, held both the saved and the lost with an impassable gulf between them. Paradise was the place of the unbelievers that has now been transferred into the third heaven. All of Hades, which resides in the middle of the earth, is reserved as the abode of the lost only. There is no longer a dividing gulf separating saved from unsaved.

Therefore, it never was possible for a lost person after death to realize his error and to have a second chance to believe, and then to cross over to the saved side (to cross over the dividing gulf). In the record of Lazarus and the rich man, we are specifically told that they could not cross this gulf. Mormon false doctrine again tells people that they can cross over from a lost condition to a saved condition after death. Those experiencing physical death in the tribulation find their souls, therefore, cast into the suffering of Hades, which will later be emptied into the lake of fire along with Satan.

The companion of death is described as "following death." Hades is described as the companion of death: "which follows." The word "follows" is "akoloutheo." This is a word for "companionship." It is a word that you use to indicate a team. Death and Hades are not only companions, but they make a team together. They're going the same way. In the grammar, this is in the Greek imperfect tense, which tells us that something is happening repeatedly. The thing that is happening repeatedly is that, as each unbeliever dies in the tribulation, Hades gobbles him up. So, repeatedly, Hades is following, grabbing up each person that dies. Hades itself is teamed up with death in this active way.

Furthermore, the word "with" is the Greek word "meta." This word basically means "in the midst of," and it connotes a company. So, Hades is present in the midst of the death terror of the tribulation era. It is accompanying every one that dies.

So, these two words tell us something very significant here in verse 8: that Hades followed with him; that is, with death. It is actively engaged in the death terror of the tribulation era.

**The Doctrine of Death**

So, that raises the question of what death is all about. A lot of people don't like to think about this. Many pastors find that if they announce that they are going to have a sermon preaching on death, he'll have a thin crowd for that service. There is something about this subject that, particularly for the unbeliever, is an offense. It is something that is not welcome. But sooner or later, there comes a time in our lives when we are confronted with the issue of death, either close, or at a distance, and then we have to have information. Otherwise we are at the helpless mercy of Satan to manipulate us. So, this morning we look at the Bible doctrine of death.

1. **Believers Don't go to Hades**

At physical death, the believer does not go to Hades or any kind of purgatory to be qualified for heaven. What we want to say about the doctrine of death is the Bible doctrine of death – what the Bible teaches on this subject? Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." So, that makes it very clear that once you have believed in the Lord Jesus as personal Savior, you have experienced at that point the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places you into Christ. Once you are in Christ, you are eternally secure. Therefore, after you die physically, you don't have to be taken someplace else to have your sins purged out to make up for some evil. You, at the point of death, are already qualified for heaven.

However, this is even more pointedly declared in Hebrews 9:27-28: "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment. So, Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him, He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Verse 27 tells us that there is a time when each person is going to die. But after he dies, that is the time when the judgment comes: not sooner; and, not later. At the point of death, the judgment is executed as far, as that person's eternal destiny is concerned.

Furthermore verse 28 tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ was offered up for sin once. Though the Roman Catholic Church says that they must sacrifice Him again and again in the Mass, the Bible contradicts that. It says, "He was sacrificed once so that now we who look for His return, are looking for Him in terms of taking us to heaven" because we're already qualified. He is going to come a second time, the Scripture says, "Without sin;" that is, apart from the sin issue. The first time He came, He came in connection with the issue of human sin. He paid for that, and that issue is settled. Your sin is no longer a problem with God. The only problem you have with God is accepting the solution that He has given you for your sin. Your sin is no longer a problem with God. He only wants you to believe the gospel. Having done that, you are qualified for eternal life. You must understand, if you hope to have comfort in the face of death, and if you have to face it without terror yourself, that at the point of death, the believer does not face some kind of future punishment.

Sometimes people are asked, "Are you going to heaven?" Every now and then you may hear a person say, "Well, I hope so." They may be a very active church person. I have told people many times that the very fact that you say, "Well, I hope so," in all likelihood, indicates that you will never see heaven's shores. That, in all likelihood, indicates that you are headed now for the lake of fire, because it tells me that you are not sure that you have done everything to make you qualified for heaven that God expects of you. It tells me that you have either not been good enough or done enough good things to outweigh your bad things, and that somehow you have failed in some doing which you are trusting for your eternal life. And if you are trusting in that, indeed, you will not go to heaven.

So, this is a very great comfort. At the point of physical death, we go to an eternity that does not require any further action to prepare us for heaven. Everyone is born into the human race under the judgment of spiritual death, and of a destiny for the lake of fire. You all were born with an appointment to the lake of fire. That appointment is permanently canceled by believing the gospel. So, Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (that is, as the Savior who died in your place), and you shall be saved."

The only opportunity to escape the judgment of hell is while you are still in your physical body. Once you have died, there is no further hope. There is no further need to qualify you for heaven, nor can you be qualified for heaven. In Luke 16:26, in the account of Lazarus and the rich man, we have this made clear when Abraham says to the rich man, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed so that they who would pass from here to you cannot. Neither can they pass to us that would come from there." Once you have died, there is no changing your destiny. The only opportunity is before death. Hell, or the lake of fire, is a place of eternal agony in which a born-again person has no part whatsoever.

In Revelation 20:10, we read, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever. This place of torment (this place of punishment) is for those who are lost. You cannot prepare for that after death.

Interestingly enough, I call your attention to the fact that this verse is making a statement concerning the antichrist and his false prophet 1,000 years after they were placed into the lake of fire, and they are not destroyed. 1,000 years later, they feel all the pain and all the burning and all the agony. It is eternal. You are not rubbed out of existence.

1. **The Soul and Spirit of a Believer go into the presence of Jesus Christ**

At the physical death of a believer, the soul and spirit leave the body and go immediately, and consciously, into the visible presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what happens when a person dies. This is what you may expect to happen to you. 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, I say, and willing, rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." He is using the word "we" in terms of "we Christians."

**Consciousness**

Furthermore, the soul and spirit of the believer and the soul of the unbelievers are conscious of what is going on about them after death. They have perception. This again is indicated to us in Luke 16:19-31. Both Lazarus and a rich man in that account were very much aware of what was going on about them.

**Memories**

Furthermore, they had their memories. The rich man remembered how he used to live, and Abraham called his attention to that – the evil life he lived, and the rejection of God's salvation provision. Furthermore, the rich man also remembered his relatives. The people who die, whether they are in heaven or hell, remember us, and they think about us. Your loved ones who have gone ahead remember you, and they think about you. Those who are believers rejoice in the relatives that they left behind that are believers, and they grieve over those who are unbelievers. And the people who are in hell remember those who were believers among their relatives, as the rich man remembered Lazarus, and who are now enjoying God's presence.

So, the rich man remembered his brothers, and he said, "They're as bad as I am. They are God rejecters. They're going to come to this terrible place. What can I do to witness to them?" Isn't that interesting? Once people get into hell, they get inspired to be evangelists. They want to be witnesses to those here on this earth. The Word of God says that the witness that people have is the Bible. If they won't believe that, they won't even believe some miracle of somebody coming up from the dead. Probably, the dead are not aware of what is going on here on this earth, but they do remember their associations. And the dead cannot associate with one another if one is in heaven and one is in hell. Those who are in heaven associate with one another; and, those are in Hades associate with one another. Luke 16:26 again emphasizes that you cannot cross over.

1. **Unbelievers go to the Great White Throne**

At the physical death of unbelievers, the soul leaves the body and goes into Torments in Hades to await the judgment of the Great White Throne. Here again, in Luke 16:22-23, we have that principles laid out for us. By the way, this that we have recorded in Luke 16 is not a parable. It is an historical account. A parable is a made-up story. This is an actual historical account, and that's why it's not listed as a parable. Luke 16:22 speaks about this beggar dying and being carried to the Abraham's Bosom, which is the Jewish phrase for the saved side of Hades. The gentile word was Paradise: "The rich man had also died and was buried, but the rich man was taken to Hades, and he lifted up his eyes, being in Torments," and so on.

So, at physical death, the unbeliever goes to the place of Torments, and the believer goes to the place of blessing and joy and peace. Revelation 20:11-12 add this: "And I saw a Great White Throne, and Him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away. And there was found no place for them. I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." And what is written in their good works will not carry them. All of their good works are there, written in these books, and after they they've been listed, they won't be enough, because they have not dealt with the issue of paying for spiritual death which only Jesus Christ can do.

So, the Great White Throne is what awaits the unbeliever after death. He is temporarily placed in the staging area of Hades. Then, at the end of the millennium, he stands before the Great White Throne, and then is placed forever into the lake of fire.

We used to have a hymn book (previous to the one which we now use) in which some writer (who was more doctrinally disoriented than most hymn writers are) who had a hymn that was singing about the glories of looking forward to standing before the Great White Throne. Boy, that guy was really off his rocker. He didn't have both oars in the water. That was for sure. He had no idea of the terrible place that the Great White Throne was.

The Mormons, because they are so confused and followed up on doctrine and on Scripture, also indicate this. If you ever visit Zion National Park, one of the great peaks is one called the Great White Throne. Of course, one of the early Mormon explorers came, and he saw this majestic block of granite sitting up there, and he said, "There is God's Great White Throne," and he meant it in a commendatory, wonderful way, as something that they're all looking forward to going to. Well, if he's a Mormon, and he believes the Mormon plan of salvation, he's going to stand before the Great White Throne, unfortunately. He will indeed get that hope realized, but it's not what he thinks it's going to be. So, there is a grim future for the unbeliever.

1. **The Body is Vacated**

The body is vacated at physical death. The body dissolves into the chemicals from which it was made. In Genesis 3:19, this is what was told to Adam – that his body would die, and that it would return to the elements of the soil from which God had made it. So, for both believers and unbelievers, that is what happens. The soul and spirit leave the body, and the body returns to the chemicals of the ground. However, for the believer, there is this a different future than for the unbeliever. Philippians 3:21 tells us that the believer will receive a resurrection body which will be like unto the Lord's body: "Who shall change our lowly body that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." So, the believer is going to get a body that's free of all the inroads of sin and all the effects of sin. Whatever physical defects a person may have suffered, all those will be removed. The believer, therefore, is going to be reunited with his soul and spirit and his body. They'll all be brought together.

Revelation 20:5, therefore, says, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until a 1,000 years were finished. This is the first resurrection. There it is describing the first resurrection in this context, which is believers being raised, and their souls and spirit being reunited with a resurrected body. At the end of the 1,000 years, even the unsaved will have their souls reunited with their bodies, and their dead human spirits reunited with that body. The bodies of unbelievers are reunited in order to go into the lake of fire as well.

1. **For the Believer, Death Means the End of Sorrow, Pain, Tears, and Death**

For the believer, death means no more sorrow, pain, tears, or death. Revelation 21:4 says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." That's one thing that certainly is a great comfort when somebody passes out of this life through considerable physical pain and suffering; physical breakdowns that can't be resolved; and, physical agonies. When the time comes when that person leaves the body, He leaves it to a place of no more pain; no more tears; and, no more sorrow.

However, the unbeliever enters a place of eternal sorrow. It's just the opposite from that of the believer. Again, Luke 16:24-25 on Lazarus and the rich man indicate that that is the destiny of the unbeliever. In Matthew 22:13, we also read, "Then said the king to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" This is another reference to Hades and to hell – the place of suffering which the unbeliever enters. So, the body of the unbeliever joins in the pain and sorrow of the soul after he is raised to life again after the second resurrection.

In Matthew 25:41, we read, "Then shall he say to them on the left, 'Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Hell was never prepared for human beings. It was prepared for Satan and his demons. But those who choose to obey Satan and to reject the gospel – they join him in what God has prepared for them. If you want to be with the devil, you can make the choice to do that.

1. **The Christian at Death has a Dwelling Place in Heaven**

The Christian, at death, has a dwelling place in heaven. That's the comforting passage which we read in John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions (or apartments). If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also." This third verse is one of the confirmations of the rapture. Jesus says, "When I come for you Christians, I'm going to come to take you to where I am." And where he is, is heaven. That's why, after all the apartments are prepared, and everything has been ready for our occupation, for those who have not died, He will come back to take us physically alive into heaven – into the place that He has prepared. And He will take us to meet Him in the air – not to the earth. He says, "I'm going to take you to where I am," and where he is, is heaven itself.

So, this is different from the Second Coming when He comes down to the earth itself. So, the Christian, at death, has a dwelling place in heaven. You don't just leave homeless.

1. **The Believer Enters his Eternal Inheritance in Heaven**

The Christian, at death, steps into his eternal inheritance in heaven, which is then seen by him. Right now, you and I have a great inheritance promised to us. We haven't seen it. When we get to heaven, we shall see it. 1 Peter 1:4-5 says, "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." So, for the Christian, there is an inheritance that is his at the point of death.

1. **For the Christian, Death is a Promotion**

For the Christian, physical death is a promotion. For the believer, it is not a great tragedy. It is a promotion. Philippians 1:21 says, "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. While I'm living, I'm living with Christ indwelling me, and I'm living for Him. It is His life lived through me. But when I die, that is gain. How the soul and spirit leave the body is in the hands of the Lord. How *your* soul and spirit will leave your body is in the hands of the Lord. He has given your life. It is only His right to exercise the authority to take your life. *When* your soul and spirit are going to leave your body is also up to the Lord. Whether you die by disease, or whether you die by accident, it's up to the Lord. When you die, that is up to the Lord. The process of dying – that too, is up to the Lord, whether it's a long process or a short one. His sufficient grace will be provided to carry you through. But when the dying is all over, you end up with the Lord. And that's the point here. The physical death of the believer, however it comes, is a promotion point.

1. **Christians Wait for a Resurrection Body**

Death for the Christian means waiting in a perfect place for a resurrection body. In Philippians 3:21, we read a little while ago about our bodies being changed into compatibility of the body of Jesus Christ. Then 1 John 3:1-2 also is a significant point to us: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. Therefore, the world does not know us because it didn't know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." So, you and I are going to be waiting in a perfect place for the Lord to return to give us the physical perfection that characterizes the Son of God. John 11:25: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes on me, though he were dead, yet he shall live.

1. **God Always Takes a Believer's Life at the Right Time**

God always takes a believers life at the right time as per His omniscience, and as per His purpose for that life. It is important to realize that. There is a certain acceptability when somebody dies as an old person. But there is a certain uneasiness when an infant dies or youth dies – a young person at the prime of life. But God says that He takes at the appropriate time. Job understood this. Job, who, while he was physically suffering, must have thought possibly that he was going to face death. Job 5:26: "You shall come to your grave in full age, like as a shock of grain comes in its season." You will come to your grave when you are ripe for it. That is what Job is saying. You will come to be reaped when you are fully ripe. That comes at different times and at different ages.

1. **God Provides Dying Grace for the Believer**

God provides grace for the believer at the point of dying. This is a very important and comforting thing. When we face death, if we have prepared with the Word of God, such as knowing the doctrine of death, and therefore understanding what is taking place, God's grace is prepared also to carry us through. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the apostle Paul understood the sufficiency of God's grace when he said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Death indeed leaves sorrow for those who are left behind. But in a few years, you too die, and you join that happy state, whether it was that child or that grown person who went before you. The issue of death is behind you. God gives grace in either case.

Psalm 23:4 tells us that the grace of God removes the fear of death. Psalm 116:15 indicates to us that God's grace for us depends on who and what God is – not on ourselves. In Job 5:17-21, we're told that God's grace delivers us from extreme difficulty. Job 5:21-24 says that God's grace promises us inner peace. In Job 5:25, we find comfort for those who are left behind. Job 5:26-27 tells us that it removes the believer from the body at the right time. So, all of this is God's grace being provided for us at the point of dying.

1. **The Christian will have a Fuller Realization of Eternal Life**

Death for the Christian means a fuller realization of the eternal life than he already possesses. 2 Corinthians 4:18: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Death for the Christian means that he comes into fully seeing what eternal life is that he possesses.

There is a variety of significance of death for other people, and this is an important thing to understand – what the Bible says. What is the significance of death when somebody else dies – somebody who is related or unrelated? One of the things that the Bible says is that when somebody else dies, it should make clear to you, at that point, that life is a very short thing. James 4:14 says, "Whereas you do not know what shall be on the next day, for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

**The Death of a Young Person**

Nowhere is this more in evidence than for some young person who walks out of the house and never comes back alive again. You don't even think about him dying. But somebody who's older, and you may have parents who are up of years, you're prepared at any moment that they're going to die. When somebody calls and says that your mother or your father just passed away, you're not surprised. But when a young person dies, and when somebody in the prime of good health suddenly walks out the door, and you never see him alive again, then you and I become very much aware of the fact that death reminds us how short life is; and, that life can be *easily* ended. Those of you who are young people might want to consider that, so that you make your plans accordingly for what you're taking to eternity with you. Job 14:1 says, "Man that is born of a woman is a few days and full of trouble."

**The Futility of Human Profit and Fame**

A second thing that the death of others indicates to us is that it reminds us of the futility of human profit and fame. When death comes, it doesn't matter how famous a person you are. It doesn't matter of what profit you have enjoyed. It's all meaningless at that point. Mark 6:36-37 say, "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

To that, you may add Ecclesiastes 5:15 and Job 21:13, which stress the futility of human profit and fame. So, when we see somebody die that may have been a very famous person, the thing I always ask is, "Where is that person's eternity?" Here's someone that's a very prominent entertainer. He has his name ablaze on the signs at Las Vegas. He's Jewish. He makes people laugh. He's entertaining. Now he dies. What value is his fame? If he is truly faithful in his Jewish beliefs, he has rejected Jesus Christ, and the Bible says that he cannot go to heaven: "There's no other name given among men whereby we must be saved but the name Christ Jesus." So, the futility of your fame is readily evident. When another person dies, it certainly should be a time to remind us of the need to be prepared for our own death in terms of salvation. Acts 16:31 tells us to: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That's why a funeral service ought to be largely an occasion to remind the living that they should be prepared for their own point of death.

Two men came up and spoke to me after the last funeral service I conducted. I knew one man, but I didn't know the other. The man I knew said, "Well, if there was anybody here this morning that needed information on how to go to heaven, they cannot say that they do not know. They are now without excuse." The other man that I did know said, "Yes, and they also know what not to do to go to heaven." I hadn't thought about it that way. But that struck me as very perceptive. That's the other problem, as witnesses. At a time when people become very sober, as they do in the face of death, and they begin thinking about these things, it's not only important that you know what to do to be saved, in trusting in Christ, but what you must not do. Millions of human beings who have trusted in Christ as Savior are going to hell because they have also brought their water baptism as part of that salvation. Or because, like the Mormons, they have also brought their good life and their good works as part of that salvation. Romans 11:6 condemns that and says, "If it's works, it can't be grace; and, if it's grace, it can't be words.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says that God will take you to His heaven on the basis of grace, and no other basis. If you deny God the ground of grace, then He cannot save you. That's serious business. There are vast churches throughout this city right now where people are singing the praises of God and pouring their money into what they think are Christian causes, whose eyes will open after death in the lake of fire and in the pain of hell, simply because somebody did not say to them, "This is what you must do to be saved, but, at the same time, we must tell you that you must not do this, because it will neutralize your opportunity to be saved.

Certainly, when someone else dies, it does remind us of the certainty of judgment that is to come upon those who are without salvation. Those who are present at such an occasion should be well-reminded that it is a time that reminds us of the certainty of judgment, because there is no going back. You pass the point of no return once you die physically, in terms of salvation. So, John 3:18 says, "He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." Not believing the gospel – that's what takes you into hell. The gospel is trusting Christ plus nothing.

In John 3:36, we read, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life. He that does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him. So, don't talk in terms of nonsense of inviting Jesus into your heart; into your life; and, all these other cutesy-pooh updated jet-set terminology that confuses people, because people don't know how to do that. But use the words that the Bible uses. Tell them they must believe something, and what they must believe is that God has paid the price, and they can have it as a gift. Every funeral is a reminder of the universal rendezvous with death that every one of us has. Psalm 89:48 points this out. Ecclesiastes 9:5 reminds us of that rendezvous with death.

1. **God can Elect to Prolong a Life and to Postpone your Death**

God can elect to prolong the life and to postpone your death. There is a circumstance where God has the capacity, and He decides to prolong a life. Psalm 118:8 says, "The Lord has chastened me very much, but He has not given me over unto death." The implication is: "I should have been given over until death."

In Proverbs 14:27, we read, "The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." God can prolong and postpone the death that you may face.

We have six or eight other final critical points on the doctrines of death that we don't want to go over lightly. So, we'll continue with those next time. These basic points thus far should summarize the understanding of what the Bible has to say about dying. It says a great deal about it, and it's a serious matter, but it's a time when there is great hope. There's great joy in the midst of sorrow; in the midst of disappointment; and in the midst of separation. But until you understand what the Bible has to say about death and what's taking place, you cannot understand it.

Please remember at every funeral that the person who is the least upset is the one who lies in that casket (if he is a Christian). The person who is the least interested in that occasion, if he's a Christian, is the one who lies in that casket. On our part, we express an honor and a respect and a love, but rejoicing in the fact that that person, as a believer, has entered the tremendous reality of a human being who is destined to be made in the image and likeness of God, and who has entered all that God has prepared for one of His own.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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