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Why Do Christians Die?



By Steven J. Hogan

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When someone dies, there's always the *"why"* question? Why did the person die, what was the cause of death? If it was homicide, they ask why did the killer murder him, what was his motive? But why do Christians die? This is a such an important question. And I am not talking about physical reasons, like sickness, old age, an accident, drugs, war, murder, or assassination. I am talking about spiritual reasons. That is, **why does God want His children to die? What are His reasons for the death of a believer? What does God tell us in His word?**

His time on earth was finished. *"All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be"* (Ps. 139:17). *"His days are determined… his limits You have set" (*Job 14:5). God had decided in eternity past the exact number of days the believer was to live on this earth. They had been predetermined by God and they had come to an end. This believer's time on earth was over, and God had to

bring him home, not one day sooner or one day later.

His work on earth was finished. *"I brought You glory on earth by completing the work that You gave Me to do" (Jn. 17:4). "David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep"* (Acts 13:36). All the work God wanted the believer to do was done. When a believer leaves earth and goes to heaven, then we must conclude that his work on earth was completed and there was nothing more for him to do. The believer went through death's door to get to heaven, and there his eternal work for God continues in a greater, more glorious way.

To be at home in heaven with His Father. *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones"* (Ps. 116:15). God the Father wanted His child to come home, for He knew it was better that he be with Him in heaven than with us on earth. It's imperative that we see a believer's death from God's perspective, for while we may have wanted the believer to stay, God wanted him to go, and to be with Him in heaven. And who are we to argue with God?

To be with Jesus and see His glory. *"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me"* (Jn. 17:24). On earth, the believer is not physically with Jesus, but now he is in heaven and is literally with Him. The believer's eyes are opened wide and he can clearly see Jesus' great glory, which is on full display. Like never before, the believer experiences His love, joy, holiness, power, kindness, wisdom, and majesty. Why would we not be glad that he is in heaven? Why would we not want the believer to be with Jesus and know the wonderful joys and pleasures of heaven? *"In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever."* Psalm 16:11

To be with other believers in heaven. *"Aaron will be gathered to his people"* (Num. 20:24). A believer has family and friends on earth, but his death results in him being with them and others who had gone to

heaven before him. This believer is now with ones in heaven who love him and whom he loves, and whom he has missed. Think about the intimate and perfect fellowship this believer is now having with other Christians. *"Who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus?"* 1 Thess. 2:19

To be taken away from evil. *"The righteous man perishes, and no one takes it to heart; and devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from evil, He enters into peace"* (Is. 57:1-2). This world, led by the devil and evildoers, is a very wicked place, and it's filled with pride, hate, greed, war, crime, corruption, racism, immorality, injustice, persecution, and much more. To die is a great blessing for the believer, for he is finally and forever freed from the devil, this evil world, and from all temptation and sin.

To be free from physical pain. *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, crying or pain"* (Rev. 21:4). What a comforting truth – the believer who just went to heaven is totally free from physical ailments, from aches, pains, sickness, tiredness, and weakness. On earth he lived in an earthly tent, in a physical body afflicted and scourged with physical struggles (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Jonathan Edwards said it this way, *"When a godly man dies, he rises from all remains of spiritual death, and comes into a state of perfect life. This body is like a prison to the soul, it exceedingly clogs, and hinders, and cramps it in its spiritual exercisers and comfort. When a saint dies, the soul is released from this prison, this grave and comes into a state of glorious freedom and happiness."*

To rest from his labors on earth. *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on, so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them"* (Rev. 14:13). The believer was on earth working for the Lord and this was good work, and it was hard, tiring, wearing, but rewarding (Col. 3:23-24). Now he is in heaven, and he is still working for the Lord, but it's no sweat, no stress, no aches, and he

never gets tired. His deeds follow him in that his heavenly work is related to his rewarding earthly work, and more than ever, it's productive, fulfilling, and God-glorifying. Luke 19:11-19

To be able to perfectly worship the Lord. *"How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You" (*Ps. 84:4). The believer in heaven is finally, fully, and always able to love God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. Since he sins no more, since his relationship with God is perfect, than he perfectly knows God's love, perfectly loves God, and is joyfully and wholeheartedly worshiping Him. *"Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known."* 1 Cor. 13:12

To be in heaven with Jesus is gain. *"To live is Christ, and to die is gain… to be with Christ is very much better"* (Phil. 1:21-23). It is much better for the believer to be in heaven than on earth. In heaven, he has no pain, sin, sickness, sadness, tiredness, weakness, worries, fears, conflicts, difficulties, or trials. His character is pure and holy; he is able to wholly love and worship God; he is full of goodness and joy; he is with friends he knew on earth. Most importantly, the believer is with Jesus, his best friend, and as they are together, there is great joy and love and fellowship. Just think, the believer you know, the believer you spent time with on earth, is now in the very presence of Jesus, *"blameless with great joy."* Jude 24-25

To instruct believers still living on earth. *"The day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart"* (Eccl. 7:2-4). A believer's death is to instruct us that life on earth is short, is but a vapor (James 4:14). It is to remind us that while we are alive, God has work for us to do, and now's the time to do it. And it is to wake us up, to alert us to the fact that our last day on earth is coming soon, and then we will be with Jesus.

To instruct unbelievers living on earth. *"Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all perish"* (Lk. 13:2-3). The death of a person is to sober up the sinner. It is to remind and warn him that he will die, and if he doesn't repent, then when he dies, he will perish, he will be punished in the everlasting lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). He must realize his need to turn from his sin before it's too late, before he dies and has no more time to repent and be saved. He must believe that Jesus is the only answer, that only He died to pay for his sins, was punished by His Father for his sins, and then rose again. *"Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring you to God"* (1 Pet. 3:18). *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, will not perish but will have eternal life."* John 3:16

To be in the house of the Lord. *"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"* (Ps. 23:6). The believer that died is in the best place in the universe, the house of the Lord. And he's not a guest, not just passing through, but is living there in his heavenly home – and it's infinitely better than his earthly home. The Lord's home is holy, joyful, peaceful, beautiful, clean, comfortable, and the perfect temperature – it's the perfect place. The recently relocated believer is not in some far off corner of the universe, but in heaven with Jesus Himself. *"In My Father's house are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you... that where I am, there you may be also."* John 14:1-3

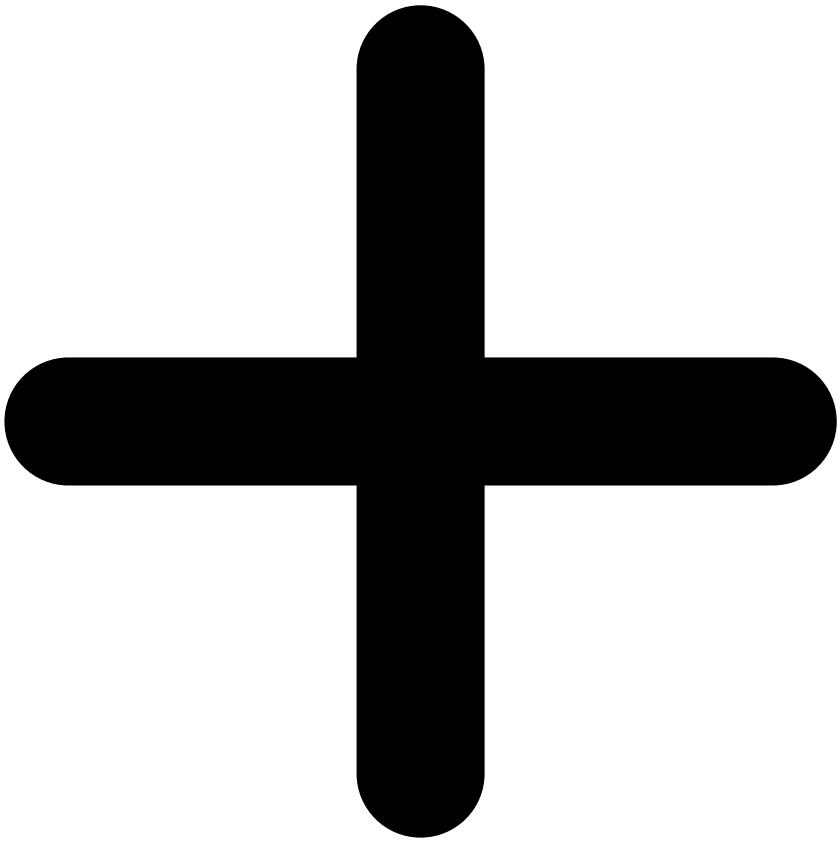
To bring glory to God!!! *"Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever"* (Rev. 7:12). This is what all these angels are saying when they see all these believers before the throne worshiping and glorifying God. Believers in heaven will be glorifying God like never before, along with all the angels. *"I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart and will glorify Your name forever."* Psalm 86:12

Consider these truths that convey God's perspective about the death and future of a believer. You may be grieving and have strong feelings about his death, and understandably so, especially a loved one. But God does not want your grieving to be overwhelmed with sadness – there must be a gladness from God that is mixed in, that sweetens your tears, that flavors your soul with joy, and stirs you to praise your precious Lord. These truths give you hope about the future and, in particular, that you will again and forever see and be with loved ones and friends.

That we live in the end-times means Christ is coming soon, and there may be many people now living on earth who are alive when He returns. Those still alive is that remnant of God's people who won't physically die but *"will be caught up together with them* (believers who physically died) *in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."* (1 Th. 4:17-18). These raptured believers will likely know many believers who died because of birth pains (wars, earthquakes, famines, plagues) and the great tribulation (Matt. 24:28). All these truths are especially relevant for last-days' believers who survive the Antichrist's great persecution. *"The one who endures to the end* (of this age), *he will be saved* (raptured and glorified)." Matthew 24:13

Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"* John 11:25-26

P.S. I have been to many memorial services, and most pastors focus on the past, on the life of the believer. Yes *"the memory of the righteous is a blessing,"* but the pastor's job is to also give hope, to share with the people what God says in His word about our glorious future. Here are two articles to read: *"Heavenly Verses That Speak About Your Glorious Future"*, and *"You Have to Have Hope!"*



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