

What is Death? **by Lester Roloff**

On the way over to Hebrews, chapter 9, I'd have you make a brief stop in chapter 4:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Vss. 14–16.

Now to the 7th chapter to see what kind of priest we have:

"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."—Vss. 26,27.

Now that Priest is the kind I believe in going to. He must be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. Show me one like that now, and I'll beat it straight to him. Who is that? Jesus.

Chapter 8, verse 1: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum...", "the total right here. What is he going to say about the Priest? He used one little word to describe Him: "We have SUCH an high priest."

A man came to tell me this morning, "I'm through with my religion. I've traded that off for Jesus." That's the greatest swap anyone will ever make. Anything that will keep you from honoring Jesus and believing in Him, swap it off! You Mormons, Methodists, Episcopalians, Catholics, Baptists and others, if you are in trouble, settle for nothing less than Christ and the new birth, because that will make you a new creature.

AN APPOINTMENT TO KEEP

We are ready now for the main text—chapter 9. We have an appointment to keep. Everybody WILL keep this appointment: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die..." (vs. 27), but he didn't stop there. After that, we have to settle up.

After that, we have to give an account, meet the record.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."—Vss. 27,28. Job raised the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" When a man gives up the ghost, what is his present address?

This morning I mentioned that fear usually takes on one of these particular

aspects.

Some people are afraid of life, afraid of what is going to happen; therefore the many suicides. They have never learned to live. People are afraid of what tomorrow holds, afraid of what they did yesterday, afraid to finish out today. Then I suppose more people are afraid of the Grim Reaper than of anything else. Oh, that's why most people never want to think about dying. "Don't mention dying to me. Let it slip up on me, and I'll meet it when it comes."

EVERYBODY NEEDS TO BE PREPARED TO DIE

Brother, everybody needs to be prepared to die. Most people are afraid of death, yet death is but the graduation of life. Death is sort of an underpass to Glory. Slipping out into eternity is God's way of graduating you.

There are a lot of false notions about death. You hear, "Well, I don't think man has a thing to do with the length of his life. I mean, what is to be will be, whether it ever happens or not." Well, I do have something to do with it. People are afraid—afraid of life, afraid of death.

Then they fear what will come after death. People are afraid of death because they are afraid that they must meet something beyond the grave. There certainly is something beyond the grave.

Now then, what is death? Everlasting punishment, damnation, God's wrath, destruction, perishing, and the second death.

One verse will give you hope—II Corinthians 1:10; but notice in verse 9 that everybody is sentenced to death: "...we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." Now verse 10: "Who delivered us from so great a death [past tense], and doth deliver [right now]: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us [deliverance from death]."

No Christian ever dies permanently. You can't kill eternal life. I don't believe in soul-sleep, where out in the cemetery we lie around for fifty or a hundred years. I believe we are alive. When my spirit leaves my body, it goes Home. A lot of these new doctrines are but forms of cults.

THE NEXT STEP AFTER DEATH

What is the next step after death? "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." The Bible says everyone shall give an account. We must all stand at the judgment.

There are two judgments, according to the Bible. One will be, in a sense, the judgment for Christians. Actually, there won't be a real judgment, because "There is therefore now no condemnation [judgment] to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). If you are a member of the "in crowd" spiritually, there will be no judgment. You will not stand there scared to death and trembling; you will

be there only for your rewards. But sinners must stand at the great white throne judgment to have their record read and know that God is doing right.

THE ONLY BOOK YOU CAN TRUST

Folks, this is the only Book that you can trust to tell you about life, death and what happens after death. This is the only Book that is authoritative. If you believe the Book, you can get all your questions answered, your problems solved, your doubts dissolved.

I'm thinking of two men who died. The Bible says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). Abraham was a man of faith, but he died.

A poor man lay daily at a rich man's gate, according to the book of Luke, and the dogs came and licked his sores. They were his doctors. There is healing in the saliva of a dog, and that was the best this poor man could get. He didn't have hospitalization; he couldn't get medical help, so his best friends, the dogs, licked his sores.

That story is similar to Job in the ash pile, with boils all over him. There is antiseptic value in ashes, so probably he would take the broken, sterilized pottery, lance his big risings, mash them out, then take a handful of ashes and put them on the boils. At least the ash pile was the best doctor he had. His friends didn't help him. They didn't bring "Dr. Somebody" out to see him. He didn't have any doctors.

Abraham died and had gone to be with the Lord. The poor man died and went to Abraham's bosom. In other words, he went into the heart of faith. He went to the place where Abraham was.

When the rich man died, "in hell he lift up his eyes"—the unknown doctrine for this wild generation.

WHY SOME PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE IN HELL

You know why the average person doesn't believe in Hell? He knows if there is one, he is going there, and he just doesn't want to think about it. If you preach the doctrine of Hell, people say, "Man, that's horrible! I don't know why anybody would want to go to a church like that."

Would you rather find out about Hell and turn from it now, or have nobody tell you and you land there forever, then wonder, Why didn't that preacher tell me? I went to his church Sunday after Sunday?

Brother, if I have a cure for cancer, I ought to share it. If I have a way to keep you from going to Hell, I ought to tell you about it, if I love you.

The rich man died and went to Hell.

Now you can raise question after question. You can say, "Evidently he went to Hell because he didn't feed and take care of the poor man who lay daily at his

gate. He had plenty, because he fared sumptuously every day and had all sorts of riches."

The Bible didn't say why the man went to Hell. I believe you can go to Hell for one reason only—unbelief.

The rich man called Abraham "Father"—"Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this f-l-a-m-e" (Luke 16:24).

I didn't invent Hell. No Christian invented Hell. No preacher invented Hell. Hell is the Devil's home, and if you live for him, walk with him, you will go home with him one of these days. Don't blame God for such a doom. No one in this building ought even think about going to Hell when I offer you the straight road to Heaven.

He raised the question, 'Would you send Lazarus?'

Abraham said, 'No sir. There's between me and you a great gulf fixed—f-i-x-e-d.'

He said, 'There's no traffic, no plane, no train, no way for somebody to come from where I am to where you are.'

The second request he made was this: 'Father Abraham, I'm not arguing with you about that. It looks as if I'm here to stay. But could you do something about my five brothers? Would you send somebody from Heaven to warn them, that they come not to this place?'

Abraham said, 'Son, remember: You had your good things on earth. The poor man had his bad things. Now your brothers have Moses and the prophets.' (We have more than that now. We have Moses and the Prophets, the New Testament, the Holy Spirit and gospel preachers. What more do you need, dear friend, in order to get saved?)

The rich man said, 'They may not hear them, but if you would send somebody from where you are to where they are, they would believe; they would repent.' You have to believe in order to be saved.

You know why he went to Hell? He never got saved. He never said, "Lord, I'm sorry. I've sinned, and I want You to forgive me for my sin."

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO AFTER DEATH?

Where do people go when they die? They go either to Heaven or to Hell. Now let us look at death for the Christian. Are we to be afraid of it? Nobody is going to bypass it. I know the Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die," but I believe if the rapture takes place, we won't have to take time to die. The ones who are dead will rise first.

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—I Thess. 4:17,18.

It will be a brand-new experience. I've never been raptured, but I will be.

Unsaved friend, if you want to go with us, trust Jesus right now and let Him come into your life.

What is death for the Christian? Just going to sleep. It is peace. Then the crown of life comes after death. Christians have no need to be afraid.

Both Moses and Elijah came back from the dead in good shape. You say, "Are we going to recognize our loved ones?"

May I ask you a question? Will we know less in Heaven than we know down here? If my mother came walking in at that door, I would recognize her. If my daddy came in, I would know him.

Now, when this imperfect body fades away and is laid to rest, with a new body and a new mind, when I meet my mother and daddy, I will know them. I have a little sister named Thelma; I'll recognize her. Yes, we will recognize one another in Heaven. Our experiences will be very blessed and sweet and wonderful when we get to Heaven.

ARE YOU READY?

The question is this: Are you ready?

You say, "Brother Roloff, quickly tell me how to get ready to meet the Saviour."

Confess that you are a sinner, because all have sinned, and there is not one thing you can do about it. You are lost forever. You are helpless. You are dead in trespasses and sin. Not the church nor Mother nor Dad nor the priest nor Brother Roloff nor the baptismal waters nor good works can save you. You can't do a thing about it. Then just make a confession; just admit that Jesus Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures. Just take the Bible plan that says, "...now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). Then trust Him and say, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and save me." I'll promise you that if the rapture takes place five minutes from now, you will be ready for it and be in it. It makes no difference how old you are or how young you are; if you are old enough to realize you're a sinner and need Jesus and will trust Him, you can be saved.

People say, "Look what you've missed." I know. I've missed being a drunkard. I've missed being a dopehead. I've missed dying before I reached threescore years. I missed the Devil's alphabet and his language. I've missed the sorrow, the heartache, the loneliness of a broken home. There are a heap of things I've missed, and I appreciate missing them.

I've been thinking about a little song. Maybe the choir would help me to sing it.

He cleansed the spotted leper;
He opened blinded eyes;
He walked on troubled waters,
Astounded passers by,

Forgave the sinful woman, Raised Lazarus from the dead,
Took bread from one small basket, And then ten thousand fed.
He's the Oak, and I'm the ivy.
He's the Potter; I'm the clay.
He's the Oil; I'm just the vessel.
I'm the traveler; He's the Way.
I'm the flower; He's the Fragrance.
I'm the lamp, but He's the Flame.
He's the words I sing to music;
I'm the bride who claims His name.
Sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus, what a wonder You are.
You're brighter than the morning star.
You're fairer, much fairer
Than the lily that grows by the wayside;
Precious, more precious than gold.
Would you come now to the altar? Come and say to Jesus, "You are sweet to my
life." Tell Him that you love Him tonight and that you are going to walk with
Him and serve Him.