It Is Appointed

(by Kevin Heaton)

Thus far in my life, I have had the honor of preaching the funerals of dear brothers and sisters in Christ. It is always so wonderful to see many friends and family who had been touched by their lives gather together in honor of them. They are indeed missed. Their passing, like all others, is a reminder to each of us that ***"it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment"*** (**Hebrews 9:27**).

Every one of us has an "appointment" with death. ***"I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return"*** (**Ecclesiastes 3:18-20**). Because of sin, all men have had to face the fate of returning to the dust of the ground, except for those whom God took without seeing death (***Genesis 3:19****; Enoch -* ***Genesis 5:24****, Elijah -* ***2 Kings 2:11***).

**Death will either be something we dread or something we look forward to; something to sorrow about or something to celebrate.**

We are able to celebrate the lives and deaths of fellow Christians. Why is that? How is it that we can celebrate death? We celebrate because ***"God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"*** (**John 3:16**). Because the Spirit said in **Revelation 14:13** - ***"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."*** Our brethren were faithful Christians and therefore have conquered death through Jesus Christ. You and I can celebrate in our deaths if we too are in Christ and obedient to the Father. Jesus said ***"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also"*** (**John 14:1-3**). Paul would later say ***"For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"*** (**2 Corinthians 5:1**).

If we are Christians, then we can have NO FEAR of death. Death is merely the doorway into eternal joy and life. ***"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain"*** (**1 Corinthians 15:51-58**). For the Christian, there is no sting in death, instead there is victory over death through Jesus Christ! Christians can look forward to death and celebrate.

However, for all who are not Christians, or faithful to the Lord, death cannot be looked forward to and should instead be greatly FEARED. Jesus said ***"I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins"*** (**John 8:24**). Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**). What death? Look at **Revelation 20:14-15** - ***"Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*** **Revelation 21:8** - ***"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."***

Jesus said in **Matthew 10:32-33** - ***"So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven."*** All who do not live for Jesus will be rejected by the Father on the day of judgment. As Paul said in **1 Corinthians 15**, the sting of death is sin. All who are not Christians will feel the sting of death and be eternally lost. Those who are not Christians should heed the words of the rich man in **Luke 16:22-24** - ***"The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame'"*** and **16:27-28** - ***"I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house--for I have five brothers--so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment."***

Seeing then that we will all face death, can we look forward to it? If one is a Christian, then YES they can look forward to death. If one is not a Christian, then NO they cannot look forward to death.

Remember this: we may not even face death at all, but instead see the Lord Jesus coming down from Heaven for ***"the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed"*** (**2 Peter 3:10**). Are you ready for that day if it comes before you die? You can look forward to His coming if you're serving Him. If you're not serving Him, then you can't look forward to His coming. The Lord will ***"grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed"*** (**2 Thessalonians 1:7-10**).