

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

The Pale Horse and Its Rider

Ronny F. Wade, Speaker

In this chapter we have a description of four horses with their respective riders. The first--white---the victorious Christ is the rider The second--red---persecution The third--black---grief, woe, and mourning The fourth--pale (dull blueish or leaden color)---death is its rider.

The contextual meaning of death in these verses probably refers to the judgments that fell upon society as a result of pagan rejection of the divine message.

But in a general way, you and I have been looking at that horse and horseman for a long time. They both wait our challenge. We cannot postpone such an encounter permanently. "It is appointed unto man once to die" Heb.9:27

We know that is true. We can name our friends and loved ones who have kept this appointment. A walk in the cemetery reminds us anew of this truth.

I. How Men Have Died.

Have you ever thought much about how men have died?

There are obviously thousands of ways in which you can lose your life.

James, the son of Zebedee, and brother of John was killed with the sword.

Absalom, the rebellious son of David, was pierced with darts.

Achan, who disobeyed God at Jericho, was stoned to death a horrible death.

Nadab and Abihu, the sinful sons of Aaron, were burned to a crisp by fire from the Lord.

Eli, high priest in the days of Samuel, fell over backward and broke his neck.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who plotted against Moses, were swallowed by the earth.

Asahel, the fleet footed brother of Joab, was killed by the handle of Abner's spear.

Haaman, the enemy of the Jews, died by hanging.

Sisera, captain of the host under a Canaanite king named Jabin, was killed by a tent peg driven through his temples while he slept. Samson, Hebrew strong man, died under the rubble of Dagon's temple. The Egyptians, who pursued Israel into the Red Sea, died by drowning. Judas committed suicide by hanging himself. King Saul fell on his sword.

According to tradition Paul was beheaded, and Peter was crucified head downward.

How will you or I die? Many think they will live to a ripe old age and then die with friends and family by their bedside. Truth is: we don't know how we will die.

II. What Some Were Doing When They Died.

It is interesting to consider what some were doing when they died.

Amnon, the wicked son of David, died while he was rip-roaring drunk

Ananias and Sapphira, two members of the Jerusalem church, died while lying.

Zimri, an Israelite prince, and Cozbi, a Midianite princess, died in the act of adultery.

Goliath, Philistine champion, died while boasting.

Some Jewish people in the days of Jehu died while worshipping Baal.

Some Hebrews in the wilderness died while murmuring against God.

Job's ten children died while partying. Jesus and Stephen died praying. A friend of mine, died while worshipping God on Sunday morning.

What will we be doing when we die? Since we don't know when we will die, we can't answer that question. Safe-rule: Don't engage in anything you would be unwilling to do at the moment of death.

III. What Is Death?

What is death? What does it mean to die? It certainly is not a long last leap into the darkness advocated by the atheist. It is not annihilation of existence as taught by the materialist. In the first century there was a Jewish party known as Sadducees. They denied angels, spirits, and the resurrection. Note Mt.22:23-28

They wanted Jesus to deny the resurrection or admit that this woman would have seven husbands in the next life. But notice what Jesus said "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures or the power of God." See v.29-32

Jesus made a three-fold reply (1) they were ignorant of the scriptures and the power of God, (2) he showed that in the resurrection there will be no matrimonial relationship, (3) he quoted a statement from the book of Exodus which shows that the dead continue to live in the spirit realm.

In Ex.3 Moses was tending sheep--bush on fire but not consumed.

God spoke "put off your shoes" "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." All three had been dead for a long time, yet he said "I am" their God. And He was the God of the living, not of the dead. In some sense they were still alive.

What Is Death?

A. It is a consequence of sin.

"Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned....For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Rom.5:12

We must die because of sin. (this doesn't necessarily mean we die because of our own sin) We would die, if we never sinned. Infants do. We die as a consequence of Adam's sin. As a punishment for sin Adam was driven from the garden, and separated from the fruit of the tree of life.

Since he could not eat of that tree, his mortality gained ascendancy and he had to die. This is really wise. Suppose there were no death. The wicked would live forever. The monsters of history would still be alive.

B. Death is a Power.

In our text death was riding. It never creeps or walks. How often we wish it did. Nothing in the universe so bold as death. Its courage and power have never been debated. It is a war horse, it comes charging. Death will trample you, it is an adversary. More powerful than position or prestige: Movie stars: Clark Gable, Tyrone Power, Alan Ladd, Presidents: Nixon, Roosevelt, Truman, recently President Ford. Stronger than earthly might: Solomon ruled the greatest empire the world had known up to his time, but he died. Hitler, Stalin, struck terror into the hearts of people, but they

died. Stronger than money: Rockefeller, Paul Getty, Howard Hughes all died.
Stronger than man's accomplishments: Edison, Wright Bros., Whitney, Bell, Ford, all died as well. Power, prestige, money, human accomplishments, all bow in reverence and awe before the shrine of death.

C. Death is a Mystery.

From the viewpoint of our nature, death is a mystery.
We don't want to die. Everything in us cries out to live.
I am 6' 180lbs, blonde hair, blue eyes.
Were I to die this moment, I would be the same size, have the same color hair and eyes.
Yet my personality would be gone. Death would be evident.
How do you explain that?

"The heart stopped" But why must one die when the heart stops? Is the secret of life stored up in that four-chambered blood pump? Or in my brain? Surely not.
God had ordained that when the heart stops and the brain no longer functions, people die.
No one can go beyond that in explaining death.
We don't fully understand death. It is a mystery.

D. Death is a monster.

During their wild parties, Roman hosts would sometimes have a man walk among the guests carrying a skeleton. In the midst of their gala affairs, ancient Egyptians hosts occasionally had two men walk through the partying people carrying a coffin or a carving in the likeness of a dead person. Roman and Egyptians were saying the same thing "have a good time because you will soon be dead."
The Epicurean philosophy degenerated to the point of "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die." Death was monstrous to them.
Death is still a monster today. When it cuts down our loved ones, we are grieved and heartbroken. There is little anyone can say or do to lift the grief.
Even though we expect to be with our loved ones around God's throne in heaven, the separation in the meantime is almost unbearable.
Death is still an enemy. 1Cor.15:25-26 "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."

E. Death is a blessing to the Child of God.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" Psa. 116:15
John heard a voice from heaven saying "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." Rev.14:13
Paul said he had "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" Phil. 1:12
Following death, the thief on the cross went to paradise Luke 23:43.
It seems that Samuel, upon departing this life, went into a condition of serenity and tranquility for when he was called back from the dead, he said "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" 1Sam. 28:15 Suppose an unborn baby in its mother's womb had the ability to think and reason as we do. Suppose he understood that the time was drawing

near for him to be born. How would he look at that event? He would probably be apprehensive and fearful. The only thing he had ever known was the comfortable environment of his mother's body.

The time approaches when he must leave that environment for one about which he knows nothing. So it is with us when we face death. Then the angels come and bear us away to Abraham's bosom amidst shouts of rejoicing and happiness.

F. Death is a tragedy for the unprepared.

Following death, the rich man "lifted up his eyes, being in torments."

Send Lazarus that "he may dip the tip of his finger in water for I am tormented..."

Later Abraham said "...thou art tormented"

Luke 16:23-25 three times it is specifically stated that he was "tormented."

What a tragic fate.

The Lord referred to Judas as "the son of perdition" John 17:12.

That is, he was the son of hell. He also said it had been good for Judas had he not been born Mt. 26:24. The same can be said of anyone who dies without a Savior.

Story: A careless Christian was married to a man who professed no religion.

He died, and the preacher went by the house.

The wife said "Oh, Bro. ____ please pray." His reply "It's too late to pray."

It is too late to get upset and concerned about saving a man's soul after he dies.

His destiny cannot be altered, a great tragedy.

G. Death is a certainty.

Solomon said "The living know they shall die" Eccl.9:5

Heb. 9:27 "Appointed unto man once to die..."

Adam, Seth, Noah all died. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel died. Peter, Paul, James and John died.

Jesus, God's son, had to die.

The only exceptions to death in the past were Enoch and Elijah, who were translated.

The only exceptions in the future will be those who are living when Christ returns.

For the rest of us, there will be no escape. We must die.

IV. Conclusions:

A. How Long One Lives Is Not Important.

It is how we live while we are here that counts

Methusaleh lived to be 969 years old. He lived longer than anyone else.

What did he do? What were his accomplishments?

All we are told is that he lived to be 969

There is no special distinction in being the world's oldest man, if one's life goes not count for God. He may, in fact, have been a failure. If there are no gaps in the genealogies, it can be shown that Methusaleh died during the year of the flood.

He may have been a wicked sinner who drowned.

Jesus was only about 34 when he died, yet he did more in his short life than any other

person to ever live. Many feel it is tragic to die before they grow old.
David "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days" Psalms 102:24
How long we live is not important, it is how we live while we are here.

B. Death for a Christian should not be a fearful experience.

Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Death can never sever the believer from God's affection and concern.

"All things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" 1Cor. 3:21-23.

David wrote "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Psalm 46:1-3

The affirmation here is that regardless of the circumstances, the people of God should not fear.

Story of T.B. Larimore, who as a teenager got a job that took him away from home. He had to be gone for 6 days. He yearned for the week to end so he could see his mother. When the time came, he eagerly started for home. He knew that there was a strip of dark woods through which he would have to walk before he reached home. He dreaded that. By the time he reached the woods it was pitch black dark.

As he started into the woods he heard a voice "Theophilus is it you?" His mother had come to meet him. And joyfully hand in hand they walked through the forest together. David wrote "yes though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

God speaking through Isaiah said "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior" Isaiah 43:2-3

When I come to the river at ending of day, When the last winds of sorrow have blown
There'll be somebody waiting to show me the way, I won't have to cross Jordan alone.
I won't have to cross Jordan alone Jesus died all my sins to atone when the darkness I see,
He'll be waiting for me, I won't have to cross Jordan alone.

C. Death Will Be Destroyed.

The ancient Persians set aside one day each year to kill serpents and venomous creatures. The men spent the whole day in the fields and forests with their sticks and clubs. God has appointed a day in which he will destroy the serpent of death.

"For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death....So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this

mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1Cor. 15:24-25 and 54-55.

Death will be destroyed in the resurrection.

Our vile body will be changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body...Phil 3:21

We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1Jno. 3:2. We can hang our battle scarred armor on the walls of that heavenly city and read our titles clear to mansions over there. Total, complete, and absolute victory will be ours. "There will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:4

D. Since we must die, let us make preparation for that event now.

Jesus lived in this world to die for the sins of us all.

We should live so as to be ready for the time of death. Life is so uncertain, like a vapor that appears then vanishes, like a blade of grass which comes up in the morning and withers under the hot burning rays of the sun, like a tale that is told, like a shadow upon the earth and there is none abiding.

Swifter than a weavers shuttle Time gets away so rapidly. Life is not a playground, but a schoolroom. We are all now preaching our funerals. What the preacher says when we die, will have no influence on our eternal destiny whatsoever. You are determining that now by your actions. If I live to be as old as Methusaleh, I will never understand how you can be faced with the reality of death and make no preparation for it.

The moment death comes, we will be exactly what we are now, unless we make a radical change between now and then. Would you want to die in your present condition?

People are dying at the rate of two a second, 120 a minute, 7,200 an hour and 170,000 a day. "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died...And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died...And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died...And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died," The story of the lives of all these men ended the same way "and he died."

2Cor.6:2 "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."

We all should take notice of God's plan for our salvation before it is too late.