

Why Do People Die?

1. Explore the following verses and discover what the Bible reveals about the causes of death and dying:

A. Genesis 3:17-19; 6:3; Romans 5:12.

The reality of death was introduced as a consequence of the sin originally committed by Adam and Eve (Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12). Human beings became susceptible to the degenerative effects of congenital maladies, genetic mutations, disease, illness and age. In addition, because man was of flesh, God limited his lifespan to 120 years (Gen 6:3). So many people die of natural causes.

B. Genesis 4:8; Acts 9:1

People may die innocently from another person's sinful and premeditated act of murder (Cain-Gen 4:8, Saul-Acts 9:1).

C. Genesis 9:6

Aware of the problem of premeditated murder, God introduces the concept of capital punishment to Moses (Gen 9:6).

D. Genesis 6:1-22; 7:1-24; 8:1-19; 19:12-29; 23:20-33; Exodus 11:1-10; 12:1-51; 14:1-31; Numbers 25:1-9

People may die as a consequence of God's judgment of their wickedness, apostasy or sexual perversion. These judgments serve as a warning of the consequences of unbelief and breaking God's moral law. Examples of such judgments can be seen in the Flood (Gen chapters 6, 7, 8), Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:12-29), the Egyptians (Ex chapters 11, 12, 14), and the Conquest (Gen 23:20-33).

While most of the biblical examples involved non-Believers, God also exercised judgment upon Believers who, exhibited apostasy and unbelief. Numerous examples can be found in the Old Testament (i.e. Sin of Peor – Num 25:1-9).

The death of Jesus Christ is unique among God's judgments in human history; His voluntary act of sacrifice paid the judgment price for all of mankind's sin (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18). He had no sin to atone for; he substituted Himself to atone for others.

E. Job 1:1-22

Perhaps most difficult of all to understand is the concept that some people may die for God's sovereign reasons, which often cannot be understood. In this example, it is God who brings up Job's name that leads to the testing of Job. Satan is given the power to afflict Job, and he proceeds to kill Job's innocent children through human and natural forces.

2. What does the Bible say about a Christian's attitude toward death? Observe John 11:25-26; Hebrews 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23.

Do not fear death - Jesus Christ was triumphant over death and provided everlasting life for those who have faith in Him (John 11:25-26; Heb 2:14-15).

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Not even death can separate Christians from the love of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:38-39).

Death is not a punishment for Christians (Rom 8:1). While the penalty of sin is death, it does not apply to Christians in both the physical and spiritual sense, because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for mankind's sin (Rom 6:23).

Understand the purpose of death - death imitates what Christ did and takes one closer to Him (Rom 8:17).

The experience of dying may be used to complete the one's sanctification.

Sometimes God may discipline a Christian to correct him from sins that were committed (Heb 12:6-11). And one cannot forget that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28).

Sometimes hardship and suffering may be allowed by God to strengthen a Christian in order that he may gain a greater ability to trust God and resist sin during the process of obedience.

Jesus Christ was a great example of this, and He was without sin:

"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb 5:8).

"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (Heb 2:10).

In another example, the goal of the apostle Paul was to be more Christ like by sharing in His suffering and death (Phil 3:10) and that Paul would honor Christ in his body whether by life or death (Phil 1:20).

Have joy at the prospect of being with Christ -

Death removes one from evil and places the Christian in peace (Isa 57:1-2).

Death brings about a blessed rest from one's labors (Rev 14:12-13).

It is going to paradise (Luke 23:43).

It is to "gain" something far better than living (Phil 1:21-23).

It should be noted that death itself is not natural, and it is not right. In a world created by God, death was not supposed to be present. Only as a consequence of the sin of Adam was it created, considered an enemy, and something that Christ will finally destroy.

References:

1. Youngblood RF, Bruce FF, and Harrison RK, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson (1995).
2. Grudem W, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (1994).

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2. What does the Bible say about a Christian's attitude toward death? Observe John 11:25-26; Hebrews 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23.