

# A Living Hope

## Death, Resurrection, Heaven, Eternal Life

Here are some questions on the minds of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders:

- Why are most people afraid to die?
- Is it ok to be scared of death?
- Is death a punishment for us?
- Does God choose when someone dies as a child to save them from a potential sinful life?
- Can people who never believed but repent before they die go to heaven?
- When we die, do our spirits instantly leave our bodies or just kind of float away?

Do you have questions you would like to add?

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### *On death*

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals."

A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning:

In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and withered.

We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.

Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures;

yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:1-12, NIV)

Is death a punishment for us?

When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires." (2 Kings 2:1-3)

Why is it beneficial for us to learn David's definition for death?

### *On a Christian's death versus an unbeliever's death*

The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart;  
the devout are taken away, and no one understands  
that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.  
Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death. (Isaiah 57:1,2)

What do you find comforting in these two verses?

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'" (Luke 16:19-26)

When we die, do our spirits instantly leave our bodies or just kind of float away?

How does Jesus contrast the two deaths?

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Can people who never believed but repent before they die go to heaven?

What do we learn here about death?

### *On dying*

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:17-19)

Is it okay to be scared of death?

How does a Christian's death glorify God?

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:54-60)

Why do you think Jesus referred to death as *sleep* (the 12-year-old girl, Lazarus)?

What do you find reassuring as you hear about Stephen's death?

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Pick two of Paul's thoughts that strengthen you when thinking about dying.

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." (Revelation 14:13)

Who is death a blessing for? Why?

### *On the timing of death*

"Tell the king of Judah [Josiah], who sent you to inquire of the Lord, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. Now I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place and on those who live here.'" (2 Chronicles 34:26-28)

Does God choose when someone dies young to save that person from a potential sinful life?

