

THE LAST ENEMY, DEATH

*And then he died*SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2026 • 18:00 • CITYHILL CHURCH

Two stories (1) one man on one day: 22 Aug 1980

(2) all men for all time: Genesis 5 (& 9/28f)

1 THE INEVITABLE, INESCAPABLE, REMORSELESS REALITY AND FINALITY OF DEATH

Human life stripped to the barest essentials – to all that ultimately matters/counts, all that is remembered.

The remorseless cycle of human life, the inescapable inevitability of death: 9 x “and then he died”.

From the moment of birth, the one sure reality for every human being alive is death.

Worldwide deaths: 1.92/sec; 115/min; 6,928/hr; 166,279/day; 5 million/mth; 60 million/yr.

Crematoriums churn out x funerals/cremations a day, all reduced to an impersonal functionality/statistic.

For all of us – regardless of our age, health or circumstances – death is only one heartbeat away.

Fully one third of deaths around the world every day are not from age-related causes.

We live as if we are immortal/indestructible (young people invariably do) until some death/disaster close to us, or the passing of the years / decline of our strength, wakens us to the reality of our mortality/frailty.

Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the brevity of human life: Ps 90/3,5f (dust, grass) Is 40/6-8a (gr, fl), et al.

Not only that, but with *very* few exceptions, a human life is quickly forgotten (not remembered by anyone).

This was powerfully brought home to me recently when I had to sort through my mother’s photographs...

“Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away; they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.”

The significance of a life, and thus any meaning to life itself, is all but extinguished by death.

Every life is ended by death; (almost) every life is erased from memory/history within a generation or two.

Perhaps this is what drives people to make their mark on history, so they can be remembered for longer.

No wonder one ruthlessly honest observer of the human condition concluded: “Meaningless!” (Ec 1/2,4,11)

We ‘go the way of all flesh’ and there is nothing we can do about it. “And then he died...”

Scripture calls a spade a spade (vs the euphemisms we use): not ‘passed (on/away)’ but died/dead/finished!

2 YET DEATH IS NOT THE END - BUT THE REAL END COULD BE WORSE!

But, as any Christian (or Bible-reader) knows, death is not the end, for after death comes judgement: man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement (He 9/27); we will all stand before God’s judgement seat

(Ro 14/10); we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Co 5/10) – cf. Re 20/11-13.

So not everything about a human life is obliterated by/at death, not everyone forgets: some things still count. There is something still to come which renders the important details of every human life supremely relevant.

For the result (the conviction and sentence) of that judgement may be infinitely worse than physical death: the second death – hell (Re 20/14-15)! Or infinitely better than life now: heaven!

All men, however rich, famous or powerful – indeed, however happy or good – come to the same end: death and judgement. Whenever I hear of someone dying, whenever I look at old photographs of people long dead, I think of this reality (vs popular sentiment) and of whether they were prepared for it or not.

3 SO DEATH IS EFFECTIVELY THE END (THE END OF OUR OPPORTUNITY/ABILITY TO CHOOSE)

Death is not the end of our existence but it is the end of being able to determine/effect our eternal existence.

Unless we have found a way past death by then it is the end of life in any meaningful way, the end of hope.

So we are still where we began: the inevitable, inescapable, remorseless reality and finality of death: “athd”. Is there no way out, no way to break the cycle, no way past the intrusion of death? Time to finish 2nd story...

4 SOMEONE BREAKS THE CYCLE!

In Genesis 5, “the written account of Adam’s line” which is also the story of all men for all time (“Adam” means “man”), 9 times out of 10 we hear the monotonous, grim, depressing refrain: “and then he died”.

But 1 time out of 10 we suddenly, unexpectedly read: “then he was no more, because God took him away”.

There *is* an exception, something that breaks the remorseless pattern, that makes death not the final word.

And the reason for the difference is given in the preceding phrase: “Enoch walked with God” (v24). After he became the father of X, Enoch didn’t just “live” for Y years but “he walked with God for Y years” (v22).

Here is the way out, the only way past death, the only way to extend real, meaningful life beyond the grave.

The rest of the Bible makes it clear that to “walk with God” means to know, love and serve him, to be reconciled to and in relationship with him; and that this can only happen when we believe on the one and only Saviour and salvation God has provided for fallen, doomed and estranged humankind.

“Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned” (Ro 5/12); “death came through a man...in Adam all die” (1 Co 15/21f). We are already spiritually dead, heading for physical death, and destined for eternal death unless a solution can be found.

But God sent his Son not only to reveal the Father to us and to show us how to live but to die for our sins (to take the punishment for / pay the penalty of sin on our behalf) so that if we repent of our sin and believe on his sacrifice for us, we can be forgiven and reconciled with God. “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (Jn 1/12).

And when we believe in him, something amazing happens about our death, about the end of our story!

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (Jn 11/25f) Death is not what God intended for us: at Lazarus’ grave, “deeply moved in spirit and troubled...Jesus wept [snorted with rage]” (v33,35).

When we just “live”, the last word will be “and then he died” – and we face an eternity worse than death.

But if like Enoch we “walk with God” *while* we live – “whoever lives *and* believes on me” – we will ‘be no more for God takes us away’ and gives us an eternity with him.

For those who believe / don’t believe, this world is as close to hell / heaven as they will ever get.

Sign over entrance to Fridaythorpe church: “Time is short. Eternity is long.” Give thought to your eternity!

5 WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE WHILE YOU CAN?

Only 3 common moments of destiny for every human being who has ever lived... (Is 45/23, Pp 2/9-11)

You have no control over the first; you have no control over the fact of the second; but you do over the 3rd.

Commit a death-defying act: believe on Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord! ‘Even though we die, we will live’: Jesus raises us to an eternal life in heaven where we ‘will never die’ (indeed, we will never be separated by death from him: 2 Co 5/8, Pp 1/23). And we “will not be hurt at all by the second death” (Re 2/11); “the second death has no power over them” (Re 20/6).

Easter/gospel/church not about giving people warm, fuzzy feelings but proclaiming to them life-saving truth.

Cf. Shankly Q: this is a matter far more important than life and death – *eternal* life and death, heaven v hell.

We are dead and dying, without God and without hope, and our death will render all this insignificant. *Only one thing matters*: Jn 3/16ff,36. “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Mw 16/26) “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.” (Is 55/6)

Time to finish the first story I began with, the story of one man on one day: fear of death – questioned what religions said about death and afterlife – proof of res – significance of res – believed – no fear of death!