

CHRIST ... and the nastiest taste in the world
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(HEBREWS 2: 9)

The term death has a threefold interpretation in the Scriptures. (i) Death is the termination of life's earthly journey. It is the experience which, through sickness, accident, or age, eventually overcomes man, and removes him from conscious association with fellow beings. (ii) Death is used to express the state of unregenerate men. They are said to be dead in trespasses and sins ; and by that term is inferred the fact that they are unresponsive to the promptings of the Spirit of God. (iii) Death is the ultimate tragedy which overwhelms the guilty. When a sinful world appears before the throne of God, each man will be judged according to the facts written in God's records. " And they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. 20: 13, 14). There are certain texts of holy Scripture which can only be understood as they are examined in the light of these facts.

Death and the Critics

And the Lord Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming- in his kingdom " (Matt. 16: 28). This was an outstanding utterance, and can only mean one thing. It will be immediately recognized that neither of the first two interpretations could possibly explain the text. The people to whom Christ referred were hypocrites, and were said to be " whited sepulchres " ; bigoted zealots who were expert at finding faults in all hearts but their own. They were already dead in sin. We do not know how long they survived, but it is perfectly safe to say they were buried long ago ; while the promise of Christ's coming still awaits fulfilment. It follows that the only possible interpretation of the text is one which takes our thoughts into the future. Christ realized the undying hatred of His enemies, and boldly pronounced that before final doom overtook His critics, they would witness His triumph. And in that one statement He reaffirmed His belief in the survival of the soul. He recognized that physical death was not annihilation, but an introduction to a new world. He also declared His belief in the final judgment. "They shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

Death and the Christ

" But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor ; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man " (Heb. 2: 9). The Lord Jesus was never dead in sins, for "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin " (4: 15). And it is also extremely difficult to understand how His succumbing to physical weakness could materially affect every man. Unless there be spiritual truth connected with His sacrifice, then a death 2,000 years ago could hardly affect modern people. The second death means separation from God ; a state of inexpressible remorse ; the outcome of lost opportunities ; the inevitable reward of sin. "Christ tasted death for every man." He took our sins, and went into the darkness. When the three hours of impenetrable blackness gave place to the new dawn, Christ uttered a cry of glad relief. He said, " My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me?" The aorist tense of the verb is used in this connection, revealing something completely

CHRIST ... and the nastiest taste in the world accomplished in the past. The work was finished ; the struggle had ended. Christ had been in the dark so that we could remain in the light for ever.

Death and the Christian

"Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets ; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death" (John 8:52). It is not difficult to appreciate the problems of those Jewish hearers. It seemed fantastic that this Carpenter should speak such apparent absurdities. Yet as Paul after-ward declared, "These thine's are spiritually discerned." Jesus said unto Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die " (John 11 : 25, 26). Once again two interpretations are instantly ruled out. Since we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and since countless thousands of saints have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, the text can only mean one thing. The Christian will never know the anguish of eternal condemnation, because in Christ he has been pardoned. The Lord Jesus said, " They shall not come into condemnation " (John 5: 24). We shall never taste the bitterness of eternal death, because He tasted it for us.

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