

FOUR GREAT CERTAINTIES

Life is filled with uncertainty. Floods, fires, earthquakes, and hurricanes destroy our homes and cities; criminals take our lives, our property, our families, and our friends. The nightly news brings reports and rumors of war. We may lose our jobs, our homes, our health, or our businesses; people we trust may break their promises; friends may disappoint us. Things and people that we count on may let us down.

Everyone is trying to find something certain, someplace to stand. And there are some things that are certain. Here are four things that we should never doubt—four great certainties. In a world filled with uncertainty, there are some things that we can know for sure.

First Certainty: And as it is appointed for men to die once,

Second Certainty: but after this the judgment,

Third Certainty: so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

Fourth Certainty: To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

--The Holy Bible (*Hebrews 9:27, 28*)

Your Appointment with Death

"It is appointed for men to die once."

All of us have an appointment with death. We may not know when that appointment is, but it is an appointment we all will keep. We will not be late, and we will not postpone it. Some of us will die young; some in our 80s or 90s. But we all will die.

Science, even with its "miracle" drugs and high tech medical devices, cannot save us from death. No amount of vitamins or exercise, no healthy diet, and no number of scientific inventions can conquer death. Death comes to all men.

When Adam, the first man, sinned against God, he and all his children were cursed with death: “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return” (*Genesis 3:19*).

We all die because we are all the children of Adam, and like our father, we are all sinners. Adam, our representative, sinned by disobeying God, and his guilt is imputed to all the people that Adam represented. We all sin by disobeying God—by breaking his law—because we are all sinners. Physical death is one of the consequences of Adam’s sin.

David, the greatest King of Israel, understood the certainty of death: “As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more” (*Psalms 103:15, 16*).

Death comes to all: “One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and secure.... Another man dies in the bitterness of his soul, never having eaten with pleasure. They lie down alike in the dust, and worms cover them” (*Job 21:23, 25, 26*).

“It is appointed for men to die once, but after death the judgment...”

Your Appointment with Judgment

Some people seem unconcerned about death because they think it is the end. It isn’t. Death is the beginning of an everlasting life, a life of total happiness, or a life of total misery. The mind of man doesn’t stop functioning when his body does. We—all of us—have a second appointment, an appointment as unavoidable as death: an appointment with our maker and judge, an appointment with God.

God has appointed a day on which he will judge the world. Each man, woman, and child who has ever lived will appear in God's court to be judged.

“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...each of us shall give an account of himself to God” (*Romans 14:10, 12*).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (*2 Corinthians 5:10*).

Our trial will examine every thought we have ever had, every word we have ever spoken, and every action we have ever performed.

“Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (*Matthew 12:36, 37*).

“God will render to each one according to his deeds” (*Romans 2:6*).

Nothing—no thought, no intention, no motive—will escape the eye of God, who knows all things and will judge all. There will be no cover-ups, no escape from the judgment of God. God does not grade on a curve. God does not plea bargain. God does not grant parole for good behavior. God is no respecter of persons. Rich or poor, powerful or powerless, educated or uneducated, black, red, yellow, or white—all will be judged by God's unchanging justice.

“There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nothing hidden that will not be known” (*Matthew 10:26*).

And if we break only one law, we are guilty. “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (*James 2:10*).

Even those things we think we do right are marred and ruined by sin: “All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (*Isaiah 64:6*). “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (*Proverbs 14:12*).

At the last judgment, many persons will be condemned to everlasting punishment, but some will be declared innocent.

Jesus said, “All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on his right hand but the goats on his left. The King will say to those on his right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...’ Then he will say to those on his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (*Matthew 25:32-46*).

No man who has thought, said, or done anything wrong will be able to survive that judgment—except those for whom Christ died.

“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”

Christ's Appointment with Death

Jesus Christ did not deserve to die; he had done nothing wrong. He was a perfect man; he was completely sinless, the only such person who has ever walked on Earth. He died once as a substitute for his friends. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (*John 15:13*).

Christ died for his friends because his friends could not save themselves, for no ordinary man is innocent. All are guilty before God. All deserve death.

Since no ordinary human being is innocent, since all are sinners deserving death, none can survive the judgment of God on his own. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Romans 3:23*). All of us deserve death, for “the wages of sin are death” (*Romans 6:23*).

But God is merciful to those he loves, and he sent Christ to die on the cross for his people—to suffer their punishment, to be their substitute, to die in their place.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “In due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (*Romans 5:6-8*).

Christ is far more than just a perfect man. He is also God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. What he did 2,000 years ago had consequences far beyond the ancient nation of Israel. He died once, never to die again. His death guaranteed that his people are saved from their sins and will be saved from the punishment they deserve. Those who believe in Christ will be declared innocent at the last judgment and live forever with him.

“For God did not appoint us [believers] to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that...we should live together with him” (*1 Thessalonians 5:9-10*). Believers are “justified freely by his [God's] grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (*Romans 3:24*).

Those who believe in Christ are not appointed to wrath, but to salvation and eternal happiness. Those who do not believe are condemned to everlasting

punishment. They are “appointed to wrath.”

What does it mean to believe in Christ? It means simply to understand what the Bible says about Christ, and to accept it as true. Jesus really is both God and man. He really did die for our sins. He really did rise from the dead three days later. He really is alive today. Believers are justified—declared innocent by God—only because of what Christ has done for them, not for anyone they do, not even for what God the Holy Spirit does in them. Christ died for our sins.

But we, being sinners, cannot believe the Gospel on our own power. We are so sinful that our minds are unable to believe the Gospel unless God causes us to believe. Faith itself is one of the gifts of God that Christ’s death gives to us.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (*Ephesians* 2:8, 9).

“I [Paul] declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you...by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that Word which I preached to you...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (*1 Corinthians* 15:1-4).

If you believe this Gospel—“Gospel” means “good news”—about the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved in the day of judgment. By believing the Gospel, you accept the salvation that Christ offers freely—without price. He has taken the punishment that those who believe in him deserve, and they receive the reward that he earned by his obedience.

If you believe the Gospel, Christ has paid your debt to God, and God will judge you innocent at the last judgment because of what Christ has done for you. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (*Romans* 8:1). You are saved, not because of anything you have done, but only because of what Christ did for you 2,000 years ago when he died on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem, on a hill called Calvary.

“To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Your Appointment with Christ

It has been nearly 2,000 years since Christ lived on Earth, and many laugh at

the idea that he will return. But he will return, and to those who do not laugh but eagerly await his coming, he will appear for their salvation.

“For the Lord himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (*1 Thessalonians* 4:16, 17).

But for those who laugh at Jesus Christ,

“When the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power” (*2 Thessalonians* 1:7-9).

Four Great Certainties

These are four great certainties:

1. You will die.
2. You will face the judgment of God for everything you have ever done.
3. Christ died once for the sins of his people.
4. Christ is alive and will come to Earth again.

If you realize that you are a sinner who has offended God, you should be worried about your future. There is no way to escape Hell except by Christ.

Pray that God will have mercy on you, forgive your sins, grant you the gift of faith, and cause you to believe that Christ died for his people, that he rose again the third day, and that he will come to Earth from Heaven for the salvation of those who believe in him.

Those who eagerly await the coming of Christ will live forever in Heaven.

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more

death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain...and there shall be no night there: they need no lamp nor light of the Sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign for ever and ever" (*Revelation 21:4, 22:5*).

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