

Why Do We Die?

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The question is often asked, “If God really loves us so much, then why did He put death in the world? Why put every member of His creation through such an ordeal?” Of course, such an attitude naively ignores some pretty serious implications:

- Even without death, is this world perfect? Would you really want to live forever on this planet? Adam, for example, got to live 930 years, but they were far from perfect. He lived through one son being murdered, another banished and unfaithful to God, a life full of toil and hard labor, and untold horrors discovered along the way – he was, after all, the first man, so it is likely he is also the first person to discover broken bones, headaches, poisonous plants, bee stings, bereavement, bitterly cold nights and blistering hot days, drought, failures in his work, and countless other calamities that are all part of life on this planet. Adam was probably relieved to die after nearly a millennium of toils.
- Would this world function without death? Plants and animals must die to feed us, trees must die for us to build homes, certain germs and bacteria must die for us to maintain healthy bodies. Every creature on this planet is alive because something else died. Death and decay facilitate existence.
- What would be the alternative to death? Either we would eventually overpopulate the planet or we would have to sacrifice child-bearing altogether. Without death, we would not have the joy of bringing life into this world.

More fundamental to the Christian, however, is the first cause of death. We die because of sin – Adam’s sin introduced death to the world, and we all experience it because of our similar participation in sin. Consider Romans 5:12-21. Be careful not to place blame on Adam alone (which is tempting), but ask yourself if you would have been strong enough to walk away from the temptation he faced. Adam might have been the first to sin, but none of us would have fared much better! Paul is sure to clarify that *“death spread to all men, because all sinned”*, earlier stating, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). He also adds, *“For the wages of sin is death”* in Romans 6:23.

One might ask, though, “But what about children? Many kids die without ever sinning!” While this is very true, we need to remember that the relationship between sin and death is a general one, not specific to individuals. Good people do not always live long lives, just as some evil people do not always receive “comeuppance” in this life. *“I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness”* (Ecclesiastes 7:15). Death exists because sin exists in the world. They are linked, but only in a general sense. Adam’s sin caused a separation between man and God, so without God’s presence the world itself began to undergo decay. It went from paradise to imperfection (Genesis 3:16-19). So while a child is not personally responsible for physical calamities that come upon him, he is nevertheless a living being in an imperfect world – subject to corruption and injury just like every other creature. Jesus Himself explains that bodily harm or natural disaster are not linked to personal

culpability (Luke 13:2-5, John 9:1-3, Matthew 24:6-9). Paul notes this world's pained existence in Romans 8:20-22, leading right into our next point.

Christ Leads the Way

Consider 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. Death is not natural. It is our enemy. *“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death”* (15:25-26). Adam’s sin opened the door for imperfection, decay, and physical death, as well as spiritual condemnation. *“For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die...”* (15:21-22). But in the same way that one man’s sin paved the way for our physical destruction, another man’s sacrifice makes our spiritual salvation possible. *“So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men...”* (Romans 5:18).