

THE MANY WONDERS OF HEAVEN

The Wonder of Entrance

Death, it is said, is the terminal conclusion of life on earth. Death reduces man's body to a few minerals and chemical compounds. Death strikes with a numbing and terrifying force. Death comes on its own terms, not ours, and in its own bitter time, not ours. Death is the end, they say.

George Bernard Shaw wrote, "The statistics on death are quite impressive. One out of one people die." We humans have a strikingly high mortality rate. One bumper sticker put it this way: "Eat right, exercise well — die anyway."

Some people, like those in Christian Science, say that death is an illusion; it is an incorrect state of mind. Folks who deny death deceive themselves. Society today has great difficulty facing the matter of death. Billy Graham once called death the twentieth century pornography. It is to this age what sex was to the Victorians. Most people would rather not talk about it.

But the Bible talks about death. It says, "The sons of men... are but *grass*" (Isaiah 51:12). Again, "There is... a time to be born and a time to *die*" (Ecclesiastes 3:2). You know the saying, "The only sure things are death and taxes." Some people can figure out ways of beating the tax laws, but none has figured out how to beat death.

If death must come — and it must — we want it to be quick, quiet, and painless. And then what? Is it really the end?

The wonder of all wonders is that, because of Jesus, death becomes for us the very doorway to everlasting life in heaven. The joy of our eternal home must be preceded by death. Through it we go Home (Psalm 23)!

Opening Hymn

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide. The darkness deepens;
Lord with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day; Earth's joys grow dim,
Its glories pass away; Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Opening Prayer

Our gracious and loving God, we thank You and magnify You for making us members of Your blessed family, the one true Church built upon Your Son, Jesus Christ. Our thinking concerning death needs some assistance. We confess that we still tend to view death as the final end. Help us move toward Your view of our impending departure from this world. Give us grace to see death, not as the end, but as the beginning of a new life with You in heaven. We thank You, dear Jesus, for saving us, body and soul, by Your holy suffering and death upon the cross. Grant that each of us in this Bible study may be touched by Your Word. We await Your guidance. In Your name. Amen.

Heaven Impossible Because of Sin

1. Adam and Eve were created by God for a happy life in the Garden of Eden. Read Genesis 2:15-17 and briefly summarize: _____

Read and summarize Genesis 3:6-8,23: _____

