



DEATH IS NOT THE END OF OUR STORY *(Part 1)*

Of all the fears that plague the heart of man, none is greater than the fear of death. We are afraid to die, afraid of what happens when we die.

Worldwide, there are approximately 56,600,000 deaths each year. That works out to 4.7 million per month, 155,000 per day, 6,500 per hour and 107 per minute. As someone remarked, "The statistics on death have not changed. One out of one person ends up dying."

All paths lead to the grave. Visit any cemetery and you can't really tell much difference between the believer and the non-believer. The dead all lie buried side by side, six feet underground, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, famous and infamous.

Life is short and uncertain. **"What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes"** (James 4:14b). Moses said to the Lord in Psalm 90:5-6, **"Men are like the new grass of the morning-though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered."**

But death is not the end of the road for those who know the Lord. The Bible tells us what lies ahead. As we come to 2 Corinthians 5, we discover wonderful truths that give us hope as we face death with all its dark fears.

The first impression this passage leaves with the reader gives hope as we look ahead to the end of our earthly journey and wonder, "What's next?" The apostle Paul tells us in very picturesque language that we have nothing to fear, that no matter how we die or when or where, we have a promise from God that death itself cannot break.

This promise is the certainty of the resurrection body: "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (verse 1). After death, believers' souls are taken to Heaven, because their sins are forgiven when they receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

Surely the most important part of this verse comes in the first three words. **"Now we know."** Death itself confronts us with many mysteries. As to what happens after we die, science has nothing useful to tell us, even great researchers have no certain knowledge about what happens a minute after we die. We will certainly not get the answer from philosophy nor from history. But Paul says there are some things we can know with certainty.

1. We live in a tent. Paul had an eternal viewpoint, he saw physical life as just temporary, and he illustrated this here by speaking of the temporariness of the physical body and life. Just as a tent is temporary and somewhat unstable, so Paul portrayed the physical, mortal body as a tent pitched temporarily upon this earth. Like tents, our bodies wear out, they sag, they wrinkle, the joints get creaky, gravity pulls everything downward, our bones and our muscles weaken. No amount of Vitamin C or Ginseng can change that fact. Good nutrition and exercise are beneficial, they help us to get in shape and stay in shape, but our bodies won't last forever, they will sooner or later stop working altogether. At best, we can slow down the aging process but we cannot delay it forever.

In the following verses, Paul spoke of a new home, a "house made not with hands," a building of God, "eternal in the heavens." This was his way of describing our spiritual bodies, prepared by God as our future, permanent dwellings. In the same way that a house of brick or stone is superior to a tent, so our glorified spiritual bodies will be infinitely superior to these physical bodies.

2. We will one day trade in our tent for a building. Think about the difference between a tent and a building. Tents are temporary and flimsy, easily torn, and meant to be replaced. A building is strong, built on a foundation, and not meant to be moved.

Someday we will give up our tent and replace it with a building made by God himself. That one fact tells us something important about death: Death is not the end, death is not reincarnation, death is not evaporation or annihilation. **Death is a trade-in.**

One day we will trade in our broken down bodies for a new body. Look what Paul says about that new body: It is from God. It is not made with hands. It is eternal. It is heavenly, not earthly.

That's what Paul means when he says, "We know." Lots of things we don't know about the future, but this much is certain. *We won't have to live in tents forever.* Someday our "tent" will be replaced with a "building" made by God.

