

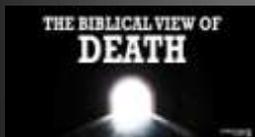
Individual Eschatology

- Individual eschatology is mainly concerned with the topic of death.
- We all face death.
 - Life is but a breath. You end up with a new valuation of life after a near death experience.
 - Furthermore, death is often quite unexpected.
- Death is both inevitable and inescapable.
 - Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 – Everything is the same for everyone: There is one fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and the bad, for the clean and the unclean, for the one who sacrifices and the one who does not sacrifice. As it is for the good, so also it is for the sinner; as it is for the one who takes an oath, so also for the one who fears an oath. ³This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: there is one fate for everyone. In addition, the hearts of people are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live; after that they go to the dead.



Individual Eschatology

- In that last passage, it describes the inescapability of death. It matters not whether you are righteous or wicked. Solomon says this is an evil.
- Solomon also underscores the appointment with death each one of us has. There is a time for every event under heaven. There is a time to give birth and a time to die.
 - Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 – There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven: ²a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot;
- Sadly, some people deny the inevitability of death.



Individual Eschatology

- Death deniers are plenty.
 - Christian scientists started by Mary Baker Eddy denied it. She thought it was an illusion.
 - Maya is the Hindu concept of illusion. So they see death as illusory.
 - Some of the modern prophets of technology believe death can potentially be defeated by genetic engineering, robotics, cloning, and nanotechnology.
 - Of course, this is contradicted by a gang of undeniable facts. Everyone dies.
- There are many that do not deny death's inevitability, but they are preoccupied with avoiding it's inevitability.
 - Even if we don't deny it, we try to avoid it. We don't speak about it. We use euphemisms. The person is sleeping, passed away, etc. The embalmer covers over the reality of the death to make the dead person seem like they are sleeping.
 - A famous embalmer said the embalmer is a master of illusions. They make the dead look restful and sleeping. They call this final look a memory picture. It is comforting to those are left behind.



Individual Eschatology

- Death is a theological reality. So let's look to the Bible's unambiguous teaching on this.
- Scripture confronts us with the inevitability of death. There are two exceptions (Enoch, Genesis 5:21-24; and Elijah, 2 Kings 2:7-14). Other than this, death is divinely appointed end of all human beings.
 - Hebrews 9:27 – And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment.
- Furthermore, death because of identification with Adam. (1 Cor. 15:21-22; Rom. 5:12-19).
 - This is why people die; Adam's sin.
- It is wise to contemplate our own death rather than avoid thinking about it.
 - Psalm 39:4 – LORD, make me aware of my end and the number of my days so that I will know how short-lived I am.
 - Ecclesiastes 7:2, 4 – It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, since that is the end of all mankind, and the living should take it to heart...The heart of the wise is in a house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in a house of pleasure.

Individual Eschatology

- Have you done this seriously? Meaning reflect on your own inevitable death?
 - People always joke that there are two great inevitabilities in life: death and taxes. All kidding aside, the inevitability of death is a reality we are called to face.
- Seminary education, jobs, work, hobbies, etc. do not take on such monumental significance when we really face death.
 - Our families and closest friends become more precious to us.
 - Our labor for Christ also becomes more important. If we live longer, we want to live for Christ.
- Scripture itself challenges us to face death as a key to living life. That is what the above Ecclesiastes passage is getting at.
 - What would you do if you knew you had seven more days to live? It's an unrealistic one since the odds are against you dying in the next seven days, and you cannot maintain the intensity of this end of life perspective for long.
 - But we should still reflect on this. Spend time with family, delegate responsibility, leave recorded messages for the kids, and square up with people and tie up loose ends.
- Do it now since you don't know when your end will come.

Nature of Death

- What is death? Scripture addresses several kinds: physical, spiritual, and eternal death.
- Here we will focus on physical first from a scriptural perspective, and then a medical perspective.
- Biblical definition: The life that animates us is withdrawn from our body. We cease to function physiologically.
 - God formed the material part of Adam, but gave the breath of life (not merely a spirit or soul, but an energizing principle) which is shared commonly by all living beings (even animals). It's a spark of life.
 - Adam was composed of both a material and immaterial aspect. But Genesis 2:7 is talking about that spark of life. So death is the reversal of this as the breath of life is withdrawn.
 - That is what Solomon is getting at in Ecclesiastes 12:7. James in 2:26, comments that the body without this life principle is dead. So death is the death of the material aspect of human nature.
 - James 2:26 – For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.



Nature of Death

- Therefore, death is the unzipping of the material and immaterial aspects of human nature: a temporary separation of the two elements.
 - This has to deal with the relationship between the physical and spiritual components. Jesus makes it clear the immaterial aspect survives the death of the body when He says do not fear those who kill only the body. Our disembodied souls continue in a state of unconscious existence.
- All of this is what the Bible defines as physical death. It also includes the decomposition of the body.
- The Bible's definition is fundamentally what death is, but our world has it's own understanding primarily from a medical perspective.



Medical View of Death

- Up until the advent of medical science, the biblical view played a traditional role in how the West understood death. In Western culture, another definition arose that focused on the flow of vital liquids, the breath and blood.
 - Death is marked by a cessation of heart and lung. So dying people were checked for a pulse and breath. If there was no pulse and breath, they were seen as dead.
- Medical advances have rendered these ideas as obsolete or unhelpful in certain circumstances. The development of respiratory machines, pace makers and other such equipment makes it possible to intervene into the medical process and extend life.
- Two other advancements have come from medical science. They are on the next slide.



Medical Death

- *Whole brain death* means either (1) irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or (2) irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, is dead (*Uniform Determination of Death Act*).
 - Point 1 coincides with the prior definition, but point 2 focuses on the brain that integrates the entirety of our physiological functions. This irreversible loss of all brain activity is usually discovered by an Electroencephalography (EEG).
- *Higher brain death or neocortical death* is the loss of capacity for consciousness (self-awareness). This definition only focuses on part of the brain.
 - The neo-cortex is necessary for self-awareness and consciousness, and interchange conversation. This is the so called higher brain function. This definition sees death as the loss of capacity for consciousness and social interchange.
 - This situation can exist in which a person's brain stem (the part responsible for the involuntary system) is still operating very well (they are breathing spontaneously and the heart is beating without assistance), yet the person's neo-cortex has been irreversibly destroyed (car accident, head injury, cancer, etc.). So the person has lost conscious existence and social interaction.

Brain Death

- According to the prior definition, this person is not dead since all brain activity has not ceased. According to this definition, however, they are dead.
- A key issue then attaches to the debate between these two definitions. It circles around the issue of personhood.
 - The first view sees all people as persons, regardless of their consciousness and ability to integrate socially.
 - The latter view sees the people who fail to meet certain criteria (e.g. to contribute significantly to society) as not being persons.
 - This view of selective or conditional personhood has tremendous ramifications for beginning of life issues and end of life issues.



Brain Death Continued

- Children in the womb with genetic abnormalities, or severely handicapped infants, or desperately disabled adults, incompetent elderly period (Alzheimer's), should they fail to meet the criteria in the fourth definition, they would no longer be considered as living persons.
 - Unconscionable treatment of these supposed non-persons would be the tragic result of this view.
- The biblical theology of the body will repudiate any definition of personhood that is based on the quality of life or social profitability criteria.
 - It will insist on a definition that considers all people to be persons until a point of irreversible absolute loss of respiratory, circulatory, and whole brain activity is reached.

