

?Is Death the End of the Soul

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What is death? Does a man become 'nothing' after death? Is death the end of the soul as well as the body?

In the eyes of those who believe that life is just an evolution of matter, death is The End; nothing remains, there is no life-hereafter.

In the eyes of those who believe that the soul and matter are not created by God, death is just a means of re-emerging in a new form – either better or lesser than the previous one.

For the former, the life is an end in itself. A man who has such a belief, must always strive to get as much enjoyment from this life as possible. Every possible material comfort must be acquired, even if other people get hurt in this process. This materialistic point of view does not leave any room for any compassion, charity, mercy or altruistic feelings like self-denial, or giving others preference over oneself. After all, this is the only life which he possesses; moreover, he is not supposed to give any account of his actions anywhere after he is dead, So why should he suffer for the sake of the others?

Incidentally, one often hears political leader of the communist world exhorting people to practice self-denial, to sacrifice their comfort for the sake of their fellow citizens. But they fail to realize that this self-sacrifice for a “higher cause” does not go hand in hand with the materialistic theory of “no God, no soul, no life-hereafter”. The Utopia which communism envisages will never materialize for the simple reason that this “one and the only life” theory leaves no room for anyone to compromise his comforts for the sake of someone else.

The latter theory of coming to life again and again teaches its adherents that the condition, in which he finds himself, is a “result” (reward or punishment) of his actions in his former life. And as such he should accept it with humility and resignation without trying to improve his lot. (If your poverty is the result of your 'Karma', what is the use of your trying to remove it? How can you supersede the decree of God?) Such a belief may be good for the ruling classes but not for the oppressed masses of the world.

.So, what is death? Let us ask the Divine Guides for the correct answer to this puzzle

Death is a Transition

These Guides have taught us that death is not the end of life. In the Qur'anic language, Death is

not 'anti-life'. It is not 'nothing'. Like 'Life', 'Death' is a 'Created thing'. Allah says in the Qur'an: "Blessed be He.....Who has created death and life, so that He might test you which of you is most righteous in action". (Qur'an, 67:1-2)

And the Creator of Death and Life has decreed that a Soul, once created, will never perish. It will live for ever. The Holy Prophet (S) has said: "You have not been created for extinction, but for eternal existence".

According to Islamic teachings, death is a continuation of life, but in another place. Once we accept this Truth, it stands to reason that those who would be obedient to Allah, leading virtuous life, would welcome the chance of leaving this transitory world, to live in eternal bliss in the sight of Allah. For such persons, death is a welcome and pleasant stage through which they gladly pass to reach their desired goal.

On the other hand, if his life is spent in transgression of the commands of Allah, he will understandably shrink from the name of death. For such a person, death is the beginning of eternal misery and disgrace. Therefore, he is bound to hate death.

Allah addresses the Holy Prophet in the Qur'an, in these words:- "Say, 'O ye who follow the Jewish religion! if you say that you are the friends of God above other men, then wish for death if you speak truth?' But they will never wish for it, because of that which their hands have sent before them; and God well knows the unjust." (Qur'an, 62:6-7)

These two aspects of death are explained by all the Masumeen (peace be on them all); and in .the next chapter some traditions are quoted for the benefit of the readers

Death: is it Desirable?

The Holy Prophet said: "You have not been created to perish, but to remain for ever; only you transfer from one home to another; and the souls are strangers on earth and are in the bodies (like) prisoners".

Hazrat 'Ali (A. S.), in reply to a question about death, stated: "Death is one of the three things happening (to the dying person); Either it is good tidings of eternal bliss, or bad tidings of eternal punishment, or there is vague threatening suspense, so that he does not know in which group he will be included.

"So, the one who is our lover and obeys us, is the one who gets the good tidings of eternal bliss. And our enemy and adversary gets the news of perpetual punishment: And the one whose position is vague, who does not know what is to be done to him, is that believer who has done injustice to himself (i.e., has committed sins), he does not know what is to happen to him. he gets news in vague words which frighten him: but in the end, Allah will not treat him like our

enemies, and will take him out of Fire on our intercession. Therefore, do good work, and obey (the commands of God), and do not rely merely on faith and our intercession, and do not treat the punishment of Allah as a small matter, because there will be among the sinner (believers) those who will not get our intercession but after three hundred thousand years”.

Imam Hasan (A): (Death is) the greatest happiness which comes to the believers, when they migrate from house of misery to the eternal bliss; and (it is) the greatest disaster which befalls the unbelievers, when they go from their paradise (i.e., this world) to the Fire which will never be extinguished and will never burn itself out”

Imam Husain (A) on Ashura Day: “Patience, O Children of noble (souls), because death is nothing but a bridge which takes you from difficulties and troubles to the vast Paradise and everlasting bliss. So, who among you would dislike to transfer from the prison of the world to the palace of the Paradise? But these enemies of yours will go from a palace to a prison and ever-lasting punishment. Verily my father quoting the Messenger of Allah said that; 'Verily the world is the prison for the believers and paradise for the unbelievers'. And the death is the bridge for these (believers) to their Gardens, and for those (unbelievers) to their Hell. I do not tell lies, nor was I told lies”.

Imam Zainul Abideen (AS), in reply to a question about death, said: “It is for the believer like removing a dirty lousy cloth, or like removing heavy shackles and chains; and changing to the finest and best clothes, or finest horses and most lovely abode.

“And for an unbeliever it is like changing fine dresses and cosy abodes for dirtiest and roughest clothes and worst and most unspacious abode and greatest punishment”.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (A) in reply to a question stated: “(Death) is like sleep that comes to you every night; but this is a sleep which is very long and there is no awakening but on the Day of resurrection.....”

Imam Jafer Sadiq (A) was requested to explain death. He said: “It is for a believer like fragrant breeze, by smelling which he becomes revived, and every trouble and sorrow is removed from him. And for an unbeliever it is like snake-bite and sting of the scorpions, and even worse”.

Then he was told that some people said that death is harder than cutting by saws and shredding by scissors and battering by stones and rotation of the axle of mill-stone in the eyes. Imam said: “It is like this for some of unbelievers and sinners: Don't you see that some of them undergo these tortures (at the time of death)? So, this is the hardest punishment meted out in this world”.

Then he was asked, “How is it that we find some unbelievers for whom death is very easy; so much so that the (flame of) life is extinguished while he is still talking and laughing and

speaking? And also there are believers like this. And there are some unbelievers as well as the believers who suffer tortures of the death-pang?" Imam said: "Whatever ease the believer feels at the time of death, it is his immediate reward; and if he suffers at the time of death, then it is (for the purpose of) cleansing him from his sins, so that he would come in the Akherat (next world) clean, pure and unblemished, deserving the eternal reward of Allah without any hurdle between him and that (reward).

And whatever ease the unbeliever feels here (at the time of death) it is for the purpose of completing the rewards of his good deeds in this very world, so that he would come in Akherat and there would be nothing in his account except that which would bring him to punishment. And whatever sufferings are undergone by the unbeliever at the time of death, it is the beginning of his punishment from Allah, (when his good deeds have already been rewarded). And all this is (done) because Allah is Just, and not unjust (Therefore, He gives the rewards of the good deeds of unbelievers by making their death easy and vice versa).

There are other traditions giving more details, but this much should be enough for the time .being

How Does Death Come?

At the approach of death, when the eyes, ears and tongue cease to function, the person concerned sees (in spiritual vision) three things which claim to be his friends. One of them says, "I will remain with you till your death". That friend is his worldly wealth and assets.

Another says, "I will accompany you till the door of your grave." And it is his children.

But one friend says,, "I am with you for ever, in life as well as in death". And it is his deeds. Imam Zaynu '1-'Abidin (A) said: "Allah has said, I do not hesitate in any order, except the death of a believer - he dislikes death and I do not like displeasing him-; So when time comes for him to die, Allah sends two angels (or, according to other traditions, two flowers) to him: one is called "Muskhiyyah" - one who makes him generous - and the other is called "Munsiyyah" - one who makes him forget. Thus, the Muskhiyya makes him generous with his family wealth (he willingly leaves every thing behind) and the Munsiyyah makes him forget all worldly affairs. Also Hadhrat Ali (A) has said: "O Harith of Hamdan, whoever dies sees me, whether he be a believer or a hypocrite". So far as the believers are concerned, they become happy to see the Imam (A), but the hypocrites become sad when they see him.

Anyhow, when Muskhiyyah and Munsiyyah have done their work, the Angel of Death (Malak-ul-Maui) arrives and tells him not to worry: "By Allah, I am kinder to you than your father. Now,

open your eyes and look.” Then his spiritual eyes are opened and he sees (in his vision) the faces of the Messenger of Allah (S) and the Imams (A), is informed who they are, and is given the good tidings that he would be their companion. Then he hears a call: “O thou tranquil soul, return to thy Lord, well pleased, well pleasing (to Him): enter thou amongst My servants, and enter thou My paradise”(Qur'an, 89:27-30).

At that time, the believer's only wish is to die as soon as possible so that he may reach that caller.

Thus, the believer leaves this world without any sorrow and without any care. And Allah gives him death when he himself desires death above all things, so that he may reach the Messenger of Allah and the Imams (peace be on them all).

.But for the hypocrites and the unbelievers the story is completely different