

### 3. Life and Death (1Q 2026 Christ in Philippians and Colossians)

**Biblical material:** Phil. 1:19–30, 1 Cor. 4:14–16, 2 Cor. 10:3–6, John 17:17–19, Micah 6:8, Acts 14:22.

#### Quotes

- There are but three events in a man's life: birth, life and death. He is not conscious of being born, he dies in pain, and he forgets to live. *Jean de La Bruyère*
- We look before and after,/ And pine for what is not; / Our sincerest laughter/ With some pain is fraught; / Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. *Percy Bysshe Shelley*
- A little season of love and laughter, / Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,/ And a horror of outer darkness after,/ And dust returneth to dust again. *Adam Lindsay Gordon*
- Knowledge by suffering entereth,/ And life is perfected by death. *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*
- The religious vision, and its history of persistent expansion, is our one ground for optimism. Apart from it, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience. *Alfred North Whitehead*
- People living deeply have no fear of death. *Anaïs Nin*.

#### Questions

Was Paul concerned about the possibility of death? How is Jesus honored whether we live or die? How do we decide about reason and purpose in life? What did Jesus reveal to us about both life and death? How do we see the great controversy working out in our world, particularly in the spiritual realm? What do we learn from this?

#### Bible summary

“It's my bold hope, as always, that even now Christ will be greatly honored through me, whether I live or die. As far as I'm concerned, living is for Christ, and dying brings gain.” Philippians 1:20, 21. Paul pleads with the believers to imitate him (see 1 Corinthians 4:14–16). 2 Corinthians 10:3–6 speaks of the spiritual weapons we can use. Jesus sends his disciples into the world (see John 17:17–19). “The Lord has told you what is good, and what the Lord asks from you: to do what is right, to love kindness, and to walk in humility with your God.” Micah 6:8. We are to go through many trials (see Acts 14:22).

#### Comment

Deut. 30:19 records that God sets before us life and death, and appeals for us to choose life. Sadly it's so easy to get sidetracked. Just making sure you have enough “to get by” can mean spending all your waking moments trying to earn money. And who ever has enough? It's like an elusive mirage, an inveigling will-o-the-wisp on the horizon that continually beckons you onwards, but you never arrive at what you seek. For those who have spent their time in such futility, those who have over-invested in the material possessions, there are some hard words:

“Come on, you rich people! You should weep and wail for all the problems that are coming your way! Your wealth is ruined, and your clothes have been eaten by moths. Your gold and your silver are corroded, and this corrosion will be evidence against you, eating away your flesh like fire. You hoarded up your wealth in these last days... You've enjoyed a life of luxury here on earth, full of self-indulgent pleasure, fattening yourselves up for the day of slaughter! James 5:1-3, 5.

Jesus points to the wisest investment, the best use of time and effort in life: “Don't be preoccupied about food that doesn't last, but concentrate on the lasting food of eternal life John 6:27.

This “food” is the knowledge of God and the acceptance of salvation. It comes from investing in a close relationship with our loving Lord, in identifying with the way of truth and right. This is called becoming “wise” with God—though the world in which we live may identify this as foolishness. “Don’t deceive yourselves. If there’s any one of you who thinks they’re worldly wise, they should become fools so they can become truly wise!” 1 Corinthians 3:18 NIV.

Learning this lesson is a matter of life and death. That’s why the Bible spends so much time outlining the wisdom of God in contrast to our foolish human “wisdom.” Human wisdom focuses on ourselves, and seeks answers in our own knowledge and strength. This self-focus turns ourselves inward, and leaves any thought of God on the outside, excluded from the way we think and operate.

God’s wisdom is not ridiculous or illogical, but it is in opposition to the humanistic presuppositions some make. We must recognize that our “wisdom” in valuing those things that God identifies as foolish—like the man in Jesus’ parable whom God called a fool, and who was “not rich towards God.”

“For the message of the cross is nonsense to those who are lost, but it's the power of God to those of us who are saved. As Scripture says, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will wipe out the cleverness of the clever.” So how about the wise, the writers, and the philosophers of this age? Hasn't God turned the wisdom of this world into foolishness? Since God in his wisdom allowed the world in its wisdom not to know God, it was God's gracious plan that by the foolishness of the good news those who trusted in him would be saved. The Jews ask for miraculous signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, but our message is of Christ killed on a cross—offensive to the Jews, and foolishness to the foreigners. However, for those who are called by God, both Jews and foreigners, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than we are; and the weakness of God is stronger than we are. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

Here is the real definition of our aspiration in life—and the reason why death does not appall us.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Do not allow anything to draw your attention from the question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). This is a life and death question, which we must each settle for eternity. Let the mind be weighted with the importance of the solemn truth which we possess. Those who allow the mind to wander in search of cheap, unimportant theories need to be converted.... {1SM 171}

[Galatians 6:7, 8 quoted.] Wonderful truth! This is a two-edged sword which cuts both ways. This life and death question is before the whole human race. The choice we make in this life will be our choice through all eternity. We shall receive either eternal life or eternal death. There is no middle ground, no second probation. {6BC 1112}

By the parable of the foolish rich man, Christ showed the folly of those who make the world their all. This man had received everything from God. The sun had been permitted to shine upon his land; for its rays fall on the just and on the unjust. The showers of heaven descend on the evil and on the good. The Lord had caused vegetation to flourish, and the fields to bring forth abundantly. The rich man was in perplexity as to what he should do with his produce. His barns were full to overflowing, and he had no place to put the surplus of his harvest. He did not think of God, from whom all his mercies had come. He did not realize that God had made him a steward of His goods that he might help the needy. He had a blessed opportunity of being God’s almoner, but he thought only of ministering to his own comfort...

This man’s aims were no higher than those of the beasts that perish. He lived as if there were no God, no heaven, no future life; as if everything he possessed were his own, and he owed nothing to God or man. {COL 256-7}