



## Sermon Series Notes

### "One Year Closer to Leaving This World (or Jesus' Return)" (Selected Scriptures)

Danny Hodges – TS2502

Intro: I went fishing this past Wednesday, somehow the subject of death came up, and as I was sharing some Scriptures that have to do with what happens at death, what the dead are like after leaving the body, etc. And these guys I was with said, "You need to teach on that?" I thought, maybe I will sometime, when the Lord leads me to.

Thursday I begin working on the message for the weekend, and since it's NY's weekend, I planned to do something NY's related. So I pull out my file of past NY's messages, hoping that the Lord will direct as I prayerfully review them. After a bit of work I already had a title for what I thought would become my NY's 2016 sermon, "I will, or I won't." After a while though, it just wasn't working. So I picked up notes from a message from NY's Eve 2013. Inspired by those notes, worked for about two hours, then got that feeling that I hate. It's the strong feeling that this is not the message the Lord wants me to share either. I then paused, feeling both disappointed & frustrated, & said a heartfelt prayer ("Lord help me, show me what you want me to teach on this weekend"). I then picked up a section of the Tampa Bay Times to read the remainder of an article I had not finished at the office that day entitled "Kerry rebukes Israel." I finished the article, and since it was getting late, decided to start fresh on the message again Friday morning. I then glanced back at the paper, and another article caught my eye entitled "Deaths Shake Gen-Xers." It opened with these words: "We watched Ziggy Stardust's final fall and said goodbye to David Bowie in January. The world stopped again when Prince was found dead in April. And on it went. Singer-songwriter George Michael died on Christmas day."

I then remembered that Glenn Frey of the Eagles also died last January.

Right above the Gen-Xers article was this headline: "Film legend delighted audiences for decades," an article about the death of Debbie Reynolds, just one day after the death of her Star Wars fame daughter Carrie Fisher. It's was about this time that I put it all together, thinking this was the subject the Lord wanted me to teach on this NY's weekend. But I was resistant, I wanted a different topic. The next morning I am having my normal devotional time with the Lord, and after my Bible reading, I am currently re-reading "My Utmost for His Highest," and a little book called "On Being A Servant of God" (Wiersbe). My assigned reading in this devotional was chapter 17 (read from pp.78-79). The direction for the message was now completely confirmed, so I dug in without looking back again. At 9 pm Friday night, after much of my notes were compiled, I came up with a title: "One Year Closer To Leaving This World."

Old Age Jokes?

Pastor Vivian Laird used to call it “the graying of Calvary Chapel.” I now call it “the dying of Calvary Chapel.” Funerals used to be rare at CCSP. I was doing weddings at one point almost every week. It almost killed me! Now there are more funerals than weddings. Melissa Niven recently went to be with the Lord. Her service will be January 23<sup>rd</sup>. I officiate a service this Saturday for a 36 year-old drug addict whose mother is a member of our church.

I used to be so afraid to die. I still wonder how I will die. But I am no longer afraid to die. See Hebrews 2:14-15.

The reality – we are all going to die, unless we have the privilege of being part of the generation that experiences the rapture of the church.

Hebrews 9:27...people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.

Everyone knows that death is not the end.

Eccl.3:11...He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.

I have never felt closer to the Lord, or been more excited about the future, both personally, and pastorally. What is interesting is that I can say that in a context of life being very difficult for me right now. Philippians 1:20-26 is more personal to me than at any time in my life (Read the passage).

When Paul says “to die is gain,” he is not saying that death will allow him to escape all the problems of this world and enter a state of unconsciousness (“soul sleep”). How do I know this? Because the Scriptures reveal the truth about the matter. The very context of Phil.1:20-26 tells us that Paul is saying to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. See II Cor.5:1-8 (groan with me?).

The Sadducees were a religious sect that did not believe in life after death, and that is “sad you see.” But Jesus sought to correct their erroneous belief by quoting from the only section of the Bible they believed in (the five books of Moses). See Mark 12:18-27; Also see John 8:56-58. In the OT, Samuel the prophet, after his earthly death, was conjured up for King Saul by the witch of Endor (I Sam.28). On the Mt. of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus (Mark 9). Elijah never died in this life, but was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. Moses did die, and God buried his body near Mt. Nebo (in ancient Moab, modern day Jordan). But both appeared to have bodies, even though Moses did not, because no saints have yet received their resurrection bodies (I Cor.15).

So, not only are people very alive after death, they are recognizable – they appear to have bodies. Not too long ago I was having a conversation with a pastor friend about Mary Barrett, former worship leader for CC Merritt Island. He disagreed with a comment made about Mary at her memorial service. Someone said Mary is now walking the streets of gold. My pastor friend said she can’t be because she does not have her new body. I disagreed, citing that angels are spirits, yet appear as though they have bodies (Hebrews 1:14). And the Scriptures already referred to previously in this message show that those who have died even now appear in bodily form.

At this point it might be good to pause and remind us how God has made us.

I Thess.5:23...May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are spirit beings (Hebrews 12:9), we possess a soul (mind, will, emotions), and we live in a body.

Where do people go when they leave their bodies at death?

- Old Testament
  - Abraham's bosom (Luke 16); Those "saved" during OT times were saved by the faith Abraham had regarding the coming Messiah. Gen.22:18...through your seed (offspring) all the nations of the earth will be blessed...; See Gal.3:16-18.
  - Hell; Psalm 86:13; Prov.9:18; 15:24; Isa.14:15; Matt.5:22, 29, 30;10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33
- New Testament
  - Heaven (Phil.1; II Cor.4; Eph.4:8 (from Psalm 68:18); Before Jesus paid the price for man's sin on the cross, believers went to Abraham's bosom. Now that the payment for sin has been made, the NT believer goes directly to heaven after leaving their body.
  - Hell

Two possible destinations eternally:

- New heavens and new earth
  - See Rev.21:1-5, 27
  - A new day is dawning for those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, a forever world where there is no longer death, mourning, crying or pain. There are no accidents, ambulances, firemen, doctors, hospitals, assisted living facilities, undertakers, funerals, funeral homes, or cemeteries. There are no retarded, cripple, maimed, blind, or bruised. No bug spray, antiseptics, antibiotics, aspirin, Excedrin, Advil, Motrin, Visine, sunscreen, band-aids, bandages, or blood. There are no cavities, root canals, braces, dentures, dentists, or Novocain shots. There are no counselors, psychologists, therapists or mental institutions. There are no police, FBI, CIA, DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), DIA (Dept. of Intelligence Agency), ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms), no office of homeland security (see Rev.21:27). And let's not forget there will be no Secret Service Agency. There are no terrorists, bombs, bullets, or war. No political parties or elections. No human trafficking, pornography, prostitution, strip clubs, drug addicts, alcoholics, or homeless shelters. No cursing, swearing, or obscene language. No misunderstandings, ill feelings, fights, divorces, lawyers, or courts. No pollution, rust, decay, moths, or mosquitos. No fear, doubt, worry, or perplexity. No hurricanes, tornados, tsunamis, or floods. No cold or heat. No aging, diets, face lifts, fat, skinny, or ugly (all glorious, Daniel 12:3). No struggles, temptation, sin, devil, or demons. It's going to be a perfect world, and it's never going to end!
  - Isaiah 65:17 Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.
- The lake of fire (Rev.20:11-15)

Transportation to our destiny after death?

Luke 16:22; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9, 11

What happens to babies and young children at death?

II Samuel 12:23; the age of accountability?

How old will we be in heaven (or hell)? I firmly believe there are no children in hell, and I cannot imagine babies being babies for all eternity. Perhaps they grow to maturity and then never age. Perhaps they mature when they arrive in heaven. These things are still mysteries, but not the kind of mysteries that should cause us anxiety. We are given enough revelation about our glorious future, and we can trust both the grace and mercy of God, but we must also not forget the absolute justice of God. For those who refuse his grace and mercy in salvation, there will be hell to pay one day. But it is not His will that any should perish (II Peter 3:9). The only people who are in hell are those who chose to reject the grace and mercy of God. They are there as a result of their own will, not God's will. That sounds like a line that could have been used in one of the first NY's messages I was working on, "I will or I won't." With that, I will bring this to a close.

HAPPY NEW YEAR! We are one year closer to leaving this world, or Jesus' return. What a great perspective to have in life!

#### CONCLUSION

Rev.22:17...whosoever will, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Cemetery tombstone: "As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. So prepare for death, and follow me." A passerby read those words, thought a bit, then wrote below them: "To follow you I'm not content, until I know which way you went."