

## **TROUBLE AHEAD, BUT TRIUMPH TOO**

One of the enemies that has intruded into God's good creation and has caused untold misery for God's people is death. This enemy will be overcome in the final victory. Genesis chapter 2 teaches us that "*God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,*" (verse 7). Genesis chapter 3 teaches us that when God's first children rebelled against their Creator, one of the consequences was that they would once again return to the ground from which they came. In every generation since Adam, as someone has said, "the death rate has remained the same - one per person."

This dominance of death will be broken when God brings the history of the world to a conclusion. Then "*Many of those who are asleep in the land of dust will wake up,*" (Daniel 12:2). Who these multitudes are Jesus tells us in a statement made to His Jewish opponents: "*All who are in their graves will hear [the voice of the Son of God] and come out,*" (John 5:28-29).

Death is "*the last enemy to be destroyed*" (1 Corinthians 15:26). It will be destroyed by Him who, at His resurrection, broke the power of death. In the great resurrection on the Last Day, God's people will rise to everlasting life. They will live with God in an existence that is perfect and never-ending.

Those who spent their earthly lives evading God will experience a different fate in the great resurrection of the Last Day. They will hear God say, "Very well, you wanted to be without Me; now be without me - forever!" and they will be sentenced to perpetual divorce from God - a never-ending existence of "*shame and everlasting abhorrence,*" (Daniel 12:2).

This idea goes down hard for many people who picture God as a lovable but spineless being who wouldn't do anything worse to a person than a slap on the wrist. But that is not the picture the Bible paints of God. The same God who at the time of Noah threw oceans of water over the mountain tops, drowning a whole world of screaming people, the same God who once scorched Sodom and Gomorrah in a hurricane of fire, the same God who fed wicked Queen Jezebel to the dogs - that same God still reigns in heaven. Furthermore, He has told us that what He has done before, He will do again. Those who on judgment day are sentenced to *shame and everlasting abhorrence* will not be thrown out on some cosmic junk pile, where worn-out human beings are discarded. They are, after all, human beings, and God would never dishonour a human being by treating him or her as a thing. For all eternity they will retain their ability to experience God's eternal rejection.

In sharp contrast to the damned are the believing children of God, for whom judgment day will be a triumph. They are described as having "*insight,*" (Daniel 12:3). From God's Word they have learned to recognise their sinfulness as well as their only Saviour from sin. It isn't easy in times of persecution to remain wise, to show sober and sound judgment. One of the outstanding ways to show Christian wisdom is by word and example - to be a light in the world, helping others to find the way into God's family and ultimately to a place at God's side.

They will live in glory forever, as they shine *like the bright dome of the sky,* (Daniel 12:3). In the pages of the New Testament, God gives us a fuller revelation of what Daniel prophesied. We know that on judgment day we will not only stand before God and be inspected, but we also have the promise - almost unbelievable! - that through Christ we will actually survive that examination, that we will find approval, that we will please God. Through faith in Christ's perfect life and His innocent death, we will not only be pitied by God but delighted in, as a father delights in his own child. To be sure, there's trouble ahead, but there's triumph too.