

Death: An Islamic Perspective

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Recently, we have lost some community members. Old and young. Death is a mystery for many. Even, for those who are people of faith, still do not know the wisdom of God. For those who do not have faith at all it is devastating. This is because they don't have a solid answer for the departure of their loved ones. The question they pose: why she or he? Or it was not his/her time to leave this world. Or he/she was too young to die. This means that only the old should die and not the young ones. If we believe that the old should die and not the young ones, then God is Fascist or nature is cruel for those who do not believe in God. But one thing that many forget is this: The consequence of birth is death. Anyone born into this life must die. This is natural law. There is no exception. Interestingly enough, death does not recognize age, wealth, gender, nationality, race, language, social position and so on. Young and old, rich and poor, male and female, any nationality, black and white, the kings and the subjects, all will die. However, for many it is extremely hard to accept. And they don't want to realize the fact that this is either the law of nature, or for people of faith it is God's Will. More importantly, death is a mystery because we don't know when, where, why and how we will die. No one knows.

In this short essay, we would like to elaborate on death from an Islamic perspective.

According to Islam, death is not only the Will of Allah (SWT) but also the Wisdom of Allah (SWT). It is the Will of Allah (SWT) because according to the Qur'an He is the one who causes birth and He is the one who causes death. This is only in His authority and domain, no one else. Both birth and death are with the command of Allah (SWT). No one can come to this world without His permission and no one leaves this world without His Command and Will. The Qur'an says, "Each soul will taste death." There is no exception, as we said earlier. The reason people do not know their date of departure and it is a hidden event is because, according to Islamic theology, it is a test of faith. Humans may do many things in life such as inventions and major scientific or social and political achievements, but cannot control their death. So, death is a test of faith to draw attention to believe in God. Also, according to the Qur'an, there is no death without "Ajal." That is the fixed term for every living being in this world. Everything in this world has a fixed term and will end one day. When the time comes, no one can change it. The wisdom of time is with God.

The Qur'an rejects the French philosopher, Rene Descartes who said in Latin, "Cogito, ergo sum." In English this translates as "I think, therefore I am." Descartes, by this statement "concluded that he could not doubt he himself existed, as he was the one doing the doubting in the first place." In other words, this means that if one is not able to think he doesn't exist, then that is the end of life. In Islam, mankind is not created in vain. He is the superior being among all creations in this world because of his talent and intellect and position given by God as a gift to humanity, and when he passes away, his soul joins his Creator and is alive and enjoys the comfort of his good work in this life in Paradise, or suffers the consequences of ill-deeds. The verse above has two important points in it: the first one is "taste" and the second one is "death." The taste, i.e., our state of mind at death is in our hand as to how we conducted our lives whether worshipping or serving humanity or in evil ways, while death itself is in the hand of God and is beyond our control. In other words, by doing good work in this life such as serving humanity, learning knowledge, helping others, taking the hand of the poor and destitute, guiding people

to the right path, living in a peaceful coexistence with others, keeping the environment clean and not damaging His creation, respecting our parents, avoiding what is forbidden by God such as drinking alcoholic beverages, adultery, lying, cheating, and not harming others, we make the taste of death easy and pleasant on ourselves. The Qur'an promised us that we will meet our Creator if we have done good in this life, we shall be in full comfort in the Hereafter. No one should fear and be sad about it.

Believing in the Day of Judgement and the Hereafter is part of the Islamic articles of faith. A Muslim should believe in Allah (SWT), His Prophets, such as Jesus, Moses and Mohammad (Peace be upon them all), all His books such as The Psalms, the Torah, the Gospel and the Quran, His angels, believe in the Day of Judgement (Hereafter) and believe in destiny that is according to the Qur'an, you do not know what you will earn in the future and where you will die. Or natural causes such as volcanos is beyond our control. Death in Islam is not a disaster, waste or in vain but a return to the Creator. Those who are true believers are not mindful of death. On the other hand, they looking forward to meeting their Creator. That is why the Shaheed (martyr) in Islam, those who sacrifice their lives for the sake of Allah (SWT) and justice for humanity have a very special place in the Hereafter. Try to be good and mindful that this life is not eternal if you are a believer because you do not know your day of return to Allah (SWT).

Note: (SWT) Subhaana wa Taa'laa, means Glory be to God. Every Muslim must utter this phrase when mentioning the name of Allah (SWT).

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