

Keeping Your Final Appointment

Jim Elliff

I once read this arresting 300 year old epitaph while sauntering through the cemetery at the Old Tennant Meeting House in Manalapan, New Jersey:

Behold and see as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
As I am now so you will be
Prepare for death and follow me.



Reportedly a cemetery visitor once wrote these words in chalk on that very memorial stone:

To follow you I'm not content
Until I know which way you went.

The writer of Hebrews speaks even more candidly when he declares that it is “appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (9:27 NASB). That is an appointment you and I won't miss!

Do you keep all your appointments?

I'll never forget my chagrin as I suddenly remembered that I was supposed to be speaking to a hundred men at a local church barbeque at the very moment I was teeing up on the public golf course! To my knowledge this was the only appointment to speak I've failed to show up for in forty years.

There is one appointment none of us will miss—our appointment with death.

My cousin lived to 101 years, but he still kept his appointment with death. My young grade school friend did not avoid his appointment with death on the day he drowned in the Missouri

river. For this appointment everyone will be “present and accounted for.” Thankfully, we only do it once.

But what follows the appointment is the real problem—“*After this comes judgment.*”

Atheist Fredrick Neitzche asserted: “When I die, I rot.” True, the body awaits its final state while decaying in the ground, but that's not all there is to it. Judgment is next.

This judgment will result in hell for most people, sadly. They will go there not because they are not respectable citizens, but because they refuse to come to Christ on His terms.

Anglican Jeremy Taylor described the awful eternal aspect of hell like this:

A death without end;
An end without end;
For death shall ever live
And their end shall never begin.

The appointment with death is for a moment in time, but the consequences of our rejection of Christ last forever.

Hell is eternal because those who reside there will never stop sinning. And God, who is sinned against, will never stop being just.

Do you keep all your appointments? You may be known for failing to do so. But your appointment with death followed by judgment will not be missed. And you don't know when that will be.

Be certain you are ready.

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