

1 Corinthians 15:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Analysis

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος)—The word eschatos (ἔσχατος, "last") indicates death is the final enemy remaining after all others are defeated. The present passive verb katargeitai (καταργεῖται, "is being destroyed, nullified") can be translated as futuristic present—death's destruction is so certain Paul writes as if already accomplished.

Death—thanatos (θάνατος)—is personified as an enemy, echoing Genesis 3 where death entered through sin. Death is alien intruder in God's good creation, not natural or neutral. Revelation 20:14 calls this "the second death"—death itself dies. Christ defeats death through resurrection, demonstrating death is not final but conquered foe. This is Christianity's unique claim—not that death doesn't matter, but that death has been defeated.

Historical Context

Ancient religions offered various responses to death: Stoic resignation, Epicurean denial, Orphic/Platonic soul immortality. None claimed death would be destroyed. Judaism anticipated resurrection at the eschaton (Daniel 12:2), but Christianity proclaims death's defeat has already begun in Christ's resurrection. The decisive battle is won; mopping-up operations remain.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why is death called an 'enemy' rather than natural transition—what does this reveal about God's original creation?
2. How does Christ's defeat of death differ from philosophies that merely help us accept death?
3. What comfort does death being the 'last enemy' provide to Christians facing terminal illness or bereavement?

Interlinear Text

Ἐσχατος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος.
The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death
G2078 G2190 G2673 G3588 G2288

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 1:10 (Parallel theme): But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Revelation 21:4 (Parallel theme): And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

1 Corinthians 15:55 (Parallel theme): O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Revelation 20:14 (Parallel theme): And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Hebrews 2:14 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Isaiah 25:8 (Parallel theme): He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

Luke 20:36 (Parallel theme): Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Hosea 13:14 (Parallel theme): I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

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