

# What We Learn From Kobe's Death

**Introduction.** By the end of his 20-year basketball career — all of it spent with the Los Angeles Lakers — Kobe Bryant, an NBA MVP (2008), was a five-time world champion, two-time Olympic gold medalist with the U.S. team, and an 18-time All-Star. He ranks fourth on the NBA's all-time scoring list.

His helicopter accident on January 26, 2020 stunned the American public, and resulted in an outpouring of grief from his many fans.

It was a sad, unfortunate reminder of Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." There are three critical lessons to learn from Kobe Bryant's death.

## ***I. We Learn That Life Is Short***

- A. Kobe was only 41. In fact, no one was older than 56 on the helicopter, and there were three who were only 13. Life is a gift given by God, and one day life will return back to Him (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 12:20).
- B. The brevity of life has been described in various ways in the Bible.
  - 1. It is like a shadow (1 Chronicles 29:15; Job 8:9; Psalm 102:11; 144:4).
  - 2. It is like a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6-10).
  - 3. It is like a runner (Job 9:25-26).
  - 4. It is like a handbreadth (Psalm 39:5).
  - 5. It is like the wind (Psalm 78:39).
  - 6. It is like the grass (Psalm 90:5-6; 1 Peter 2:24).
  - 7. It is like a leaf (Isaiah 64:6).
  - 8. It is like a vapor (James 4:14).
- C. Moses, in Psalm 90:10-12, encouraged every reader of his psalm to consider their mortality so they may gain a wise heart.

## ***II. We Learn That Life Is Uncertain***

- A. The crash, like so many events in life, was an unforeseeable accident. It teaches the solemn lesson that you may come to the end of your life at any time (1 Samuel 26:10; Job 14:5; 30:23; Ecclesiastes 8:8).
  - 1. Accidents claim thousands of lives — even young ones — every year.
  - 2. Even the young die with tragic illnesses. Around eighty children have died from the flu in the 2019-20 season.
- B. But even if your life isn't that full of misfortune, your heart may change tomorrow.
  - 1. For whatever reason, the heart may be pliable today, but not tomorrow. "Now is the acceptable time" (2 Corinthians 6:2).
  - 2. If you hear His voice today, obey today (Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7). There are no passages which say "obey tomorrow."
- C. "Now" is emphasized because the Lord could come at any time. The scriptures use the metaphor of a "thief in the night" to describe its uncertainty (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15).

### **III. We Learn That Life Involves Preparation**

- A. Jesus, in Matthew 24:37-25:46, gives a preview of His second coming.
  - 1. After giving numerous signs of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus then said that no one can know when He will return.
  - 2. There would be no signs given for that great day. Instead, Jesus warns us to watch for His return.
- B. Three illustrations.
  - 1. The days of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39).
    - a) Those before the Flood discharged the business of the day and made their plans for tomorrow with no thought of evil or anticipation of trouble down to the very moment God's wrath was poured out on them.
    - b) Despite all the warnings, they were completely taken by surprise. Likewise, as was mentioned in the previous point, the Lord's coming will be a surprise — one day the dragnet will be cast into the sea (Matthew 13:47-50).
  - 2. The two in the field and the mill (Matthew 24:40-41).
    - a) These verses have been used by Premillennialists to "prove" that Jesus was speaking of the Rapture. However, this is the same point as in the previous illustration.
    - b) The one in the field and the mill were "taken" to be eternally punished and the ones who were "left" were righteous.
  - 3. The faithful householder (Matthew 24:42-44).
    - a) A thief gives no warning when he robs a house; therefore, one must always be on watch.
    - b) Again, there were definite signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. The only recourse a Christian has now is to watch and be prepared (Luke 21:34-36). For emphasis, Jesus teaches us to be prepared with parables.
- C. Three parables.
  - 1. The wise servant (Matthew 24:45-51).
    - a) The good servant is prepared for the Lord's return at any time, is faithful throughout his delay, and in the end is rewarded. The wicked servant is faithless in fulfilling responsibilities, abusive to fellow servants, and lax in waiting for the master's return.
    - b) This parable teaches that we cannot neglect preparation. The revealed presence of God is represented as such an overpowering event that sinners are crushed by it. The evil servant ultimately earned his expected punishment — eternal condemnation (cp. Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).
  - 2. The ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).
    - a) The foolish virgins do not forget to bring oil; rather, the delay of the bridegroom shows they did not bring enough. They were foolish because they failed to provide for their lord's delay.
    - b) This parable teaches that you cannot borrow what you can buy. There will be no borrowed righteousness on the day of the Lord's coming. All Christians must be ready now and each soul must see to their own lamp.
    - c) The oil of God's grace is given without price, but in the hour of the Lord's appearing it will be too late to seek for it (Isaiah 55:1-2, 6).

3. The talents (Matthew 25:14-30).
  - a) The parable of the virgins represented watchfulness displaying itself in waiting for the Lord, while it is here displayed in working for the Lord. There it was inward spiritual life, here it is external activity.
  - b) This parable teaches that we cannot recall lost opportunities. This advice is especially useful for those of us who have children. We must use what we have and not fret over being judged in regard to what we lack (cp. v. 15, "according to his own ability").
- D. The judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46).
  1. Jesus did not intend to teach that benevolent works alone would save you. The meaning is that no one can be saved without these fruits of faith, love, and repentance (cp. Matthew 3:8).
  2. God prepared a joyful kingdom and wants mankind to occupy it with Him. He also prepared a place of sorrow and man can cast his lot there if he chooses. The doom of the wicked is as permanent as the reward of the righteous.

**Conclusion.** While our society tends to only focus on the most famous when tragedy strikes, there were nine people on that helicopter. And they all teach us the same three lessons.

There are 7.5 billion people on earth and about 153,000 die every day. That means that 106 die every minute. Amazingly, 4,250 have died in the time it took to preach this sermon. And they all teach the same three lessons.

These deaths affected thousands of people. More than likely, our death with only affect a relative few. But those relative few are important, because they stand the chance of learning about God's plan for their life based on how we lived ours.