

“Kill Death” - New Year's Telecast **Transcript**

presented by Dr. Ramesh Richard, PhD, ThD

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The man was in the habit of reading the obituary column in the newspaper everyday. He often wondered why people died in alphabetical order, but satisfied that his name wasn't there proceeded on to living a rather good day. On this particular morning, the unbelievable shocked him. As he scanned the obituaries in alphabetical order he found his name there. Immediately he called to vehemently protest to the editor: "You've got my name in there. You should have checked with my family, or phoned me to verify I was dead indeed." The editor calmed him down with "We apologize, sir. In order to make up for placing you in the death column today, we will feature you in the birth column tomorrow. Would that be alright?" We are told that the man felt much better for the rest of the day.

May I invite you to join me in addressing the greatest problem facing the human situation, on how to confront and win the ultimate war with humanity's inevitable enemy... death! You read that right... DEATH, like in the opposite of birth and life.

Killer death poses an incomprehensible mystery, proves itself as the ultimate human enemy, presents the inevitable situation in which you and I find ourselves. We need a death-killer, who could, would, and should kill killer-death forever and bring life and eternity into the full view of the human race. Let's first consider killer-death before we introduce you to the death-killer. Since I myself am a part of this deathly human situation, I don't have the solution in myself, but would like to point you in a powerful direction. Yes, I'm dying, like you are. I speak as a dying man to a dying world. Yet, I've found hope for humanity's horror and would like to introduce to the death killer who has crushed killer death. Killer-death will come for you and me, but the death-killer has come for you and me.

I. Killer Death is inevitable

A Middle Eastern parable speaks of a merchant meeting death at the market square in the great city of Baghdad. Scared of dying, he runs to the Grand Vizier, (the Executive Head of the Ottoman Empire) and asks to borrow his horse and run away from death to the distant city of Samara. The Grand Vizier's loans him his horse on which he swiftly rides to Samara. That evening while the Grand Vizier was walking down the market street, he meets death and queries, "why did you startle my servant? You told him of your appointment with him tonight. He has run away. You surprised him badly." Death replied to the Grand Vizier, "It was your servant who surprised me. I thought I had a meeting with him tonight in distant Samara."

Death, teaches the parable, is inevitable. You and I are candidates to die. If I don't tell you how to overcome death, you will hate me in the future forever. If I didn't tell you how you can get rid of the specter of death in your life, you'll ask me some day why I didn't let you know and see the implications sooner. In this article, I want to share with you how the death-killer has destroyed death and brought life into the full view of the human race. Just like a medical doctor warns and alerts his patients but gives them the privilege of choosing from options and making decisions, there is tremendous value to letting you know about your genetic heritage and your eventual destination. You can

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consider the options and make the decision. Together let's study killer-death, identify our options, and then rightly respond to it.

So we all die. There's nothing new about that. In fact, there's no question about that fact. Thousands of registrations and comments arrive at our website each year as people make observations and questions. I welcome you to visit our website as well for year-long dialogue. However, one question that has never been asked by any one is simply "do we all die"? A North African thinker notices that at the celebration of a baby's birth, people ask many questions: "Is he going to be tall or short, handsome or ugly, rich or poor?" They do not ask, "is he going to die?" In fact, when I held our newborn second son, a dreadful thought entered my mind, as I held a newborn in my hand: "this baby is going to die. Hopefully though, not before I do. Death will be a reality for him and me."

We will all succumb to killer death by either age, disease or violence. Age will get you if the other intruders do not first rob you of life. You start out as a baby and live through life. I wish you the hearty Asian salutation of a long, prosperous and happy life. I greeted my 88-year old mentor with "happy birthday," and he quickly quipped: "the only happy birthday is the next one!" Or we may die of disease. Some of you worry since you carry terminal disease inside your system right now, whether cancer, AIDS, or possibly recurrent SARS. A friend contracted pancreatic cancer and rued: "It's a dreadful disease, Ramesh. It doesn't give me options." Or we can die by violence. People's violence or nature's violence. Accidental violence or intentional violence. By nature's violence in earthquakes or volcanoes or hurricanes or cyclones or floods. Or we can die of human violence, of war, civil war, international war, terrorism, communal violence, domestic violence, criminal mischief, or any sort of people's violence towards one another. In Ethiopia they told me about 500,000 deaths that their previous dictator coordinated. In the neighboring country of Uganda, about 300,000 people were killed by another ruthless dictator. In the late 20th century, about a million people in Rwanda and Burundi died in racial genocide. Mass graves have been found in both the Middle East and Europe. In the US about 40,000 people are sacrificed to the highway gods each year.

A brilliant student of languages picking up English as his third or fourth language was asked, "If you could choose, would you rather die in a collision or an explosion?" He replied, "In a collision of course! Because in a collision, there you are; in an explosion, where are you?" "Where are you?" That's the question. Death is an enemy. It generates terror upon the human race. It keeps you living off balance, looking over your shoulder. "Where will you be?"

Managing Death. Killer-death is indeed humanity's inevitable enemy. Since we need a response to killer-death, we clever but mere humans manufacture several death management strategies. Here are, broadly speaking, four death management strategies.

First, you can deny that you're going to die. You can deny your upcoming death in hard or soft ways, as much and as loud as you want, but that's like denying your own existence. Did you hear of the life insurance sales person who looked at a hesitant older

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couple and assured them with: "I don't want to frighten you into a decision. In fact, why don't you please think about it, sleep over it, and tomorrow morning, if you do get up, call me and let me know your decision."

Some deny death in a softer approach. Putting a nice twist of gentle words of high culture, graveyards and crematoriums are now called funeral parks and rest lands. They beautify corpses into handsome figures who look much better dead than they ever did when alive. They pipe in beautiful music even into the coffins. They want to keep death-infested gardens manicured just right. In Ghana a friend of mine had his father buried in the chassis of a gold Mercedes Benz, to meet a customary expectation of a good burial for someone who had died. His family also thought they may need his extra post-death attention. That cultural tactic helps soften the appalling presence of death. Others put a humorous face on death. I've heard sayings like "unless we get older we die." Or "short of dying we can live through anything" or "dying is the last thing I intend to do." I even had somebody ask me, 'why do suicide bomber pilots wear helmets?' But whatever you make it, happy or sad, death is real. An Oscar winning producer actor movie director quipped, "it's not that I'm afraid of death or anything, it's just that I don't want to be there when it happens." Sometimes we feel an invincibility syndrome in our hearts where we think everybody else will die sooner and earlier than ourselves. Somehow we'll survive everybody else. Actually, Oscar-winning actor-producer was referring to the inevitability condition that counters the invincibility syndrome. You cannot deny death. It's like saying you can't speak a word of English in English.

A second death management strategy is to delay or postpone your death. Except you can't stop the clock once started. I read T-shirt message, "God has set a certain number of things every person must do. I am so busy and far behind that at this rate, I will never die." An amusing admission of the impossible delay. Our rendezvous with death is certain. The great equalizer will meet you and meet me. I speak as a dying man to a dying world. When our number is up, it's up. A friend of mine was at the airport waiting when a gloomy and despairing. voice announced, "ladies and gentlemen, there's been an air crash; hence, our plane will be delayed." His copassenger muttered in despair, "I guess when my number's up, it's up." My friend having learned the secret to killing death, looked at this neighbor and whispered, "Yes, when you're number's up, it's up, but I do know the One who puts the numbers up!" He shared the secret of the death-killer with his fellow-traveler. We can't delay death, because we can't stop the clock.

"Doing your own death" is occasionally practiced as a third death management strategy. Sort of speeding it up, or hastening it, or "quitting the game since you are losing anyway" strategy in order to rob death of its control. People in addictions, bad habits, health challenges and in hazardous situations, try to do their own death fast. You may have heard of the chain-smoker who read that smoking causes death and gave up reading! Do you feel like doing your own death? Perhaps you feel a spiritual ache in your life, the emotional pain of a broken heart, or the intellectual pain of meaninglessness. May be you are in such physical pain in your body that somehow you wish you could be relieved from all that. You've even talked to doctors about paying to euthanize your life. You've

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actually strategized to take your life. But you haven't died yet. That's good because I have hope to share with you. For really, you can't do your own death. When death's time comes, you die.

The final way, because it's the standard way, is to manage death by simply dealing with the fact. You admit the reality and do the best that you can within life's limitation. So some simply pursue pleasure to the hilt. That hedonistic tactic is not original with you. "To eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die", is an old philosophy of life. Better yet, you deal with death in a wiser way. You invest in people who will likely survive you. You may be investing in young people today who will survive your death, but your investment will not survive their death. You teach them your principles for living, your values, your convictions, your tactics and strategies function as their life coach. You write books that can out last your life. The principles may live past your death helping your beneficiaries, but those principles will not live past their death. Or, the best course yet in dealing with death, is to will your vital organs, a part of your kidney or brain or heart, so somebody else can live past your sudden death. Your gift too however will not live past their death.

Alright, death is inevitable. The Hindus sages of long ago said it well. "We know that we will die. We don't know when, how and where." Buddhist scholars told us that we need to contemplate death so we can concentrate the mind on life. Religions and philosophies will give you a way of managing death in a more meaningful way. Your family and science will give you a way of managing death in a more comfortable way. The real question is, 'is there a cure for death'? Can death be destroyed? Can death be killed? Can you put death on death row? Can we place death on a death sentence? Can we find a death killer? A Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, lying on a hospital bed with cancer, called his press agency and stated, "I knew everybody had to die but somehow I thought in my case it would make an exception. Now what?" He was looking for a cure for death. The yearning for the cure for death permanently permeates your soul and mine. A patient charged his doctors with, 'I'm dying. Please find the cure for death in a hurry. Discover a way to save me. I'll pay you whatever you want.' To which the frustrated doctor told his colleague, "I have found the cure for death, except it'll take forever to test it!"

The question in the human heart, caused by the certainty of death is far deeper than mere death management. It seeks the absolute defeat of death. We want a death-killer. A death-destroyer who will bring life in to the full view of the human race. Is there some way beyond denying, delaying doing your own death, or dealing with your own death? Is there a way to destroy death? I've got great news for you!

II. The Death-Killer is incredible

Now that we've talked about killer death, I'd like to introduce you to the death-killer. An incredible twist and turn to what we thought was the eternal human condition has taken place. In fact, if you want to crush, defeat, and vanquish death, you can entrust your life today to the death-killer. Identifying the death-killer. Who qualifies as the death-killer? A death-killer must provide a purposeful, powerful and public demonstration that he can

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personally conquer death. He can't just make noises and claims; not just proclamations and pronouncements, nor even promises of killing death without publicly and personally substantiating his claim to beat death at its own game. Here are qualities of a death-killer whom you can trust with your life forever.

One, the death-killer, could suffer death. We intuitively know that if any one could beat death, it has to be God. We know that God can take care of the death situation but, gods by definition, cannot suffer death. Who would want a God who can die? The gods prefer sit in their heavens; distant from death, and as a result, their propositions about death don't ring true. If they offer a solution to death from a distance, they wouldn't be authentic enough to be taken seriously by us humans. Now if God could become man, he could suffer death.

It's at this point, I want you take a good look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He declared, "I came down from heaven" to emphasize his divine origin-six times in one interchange. Note the meaning of his assertion in terms of our subject. The One who can beat death cannot be sourced in the earth where all die, but in heaven where there is no death. One of the ways to know if God really became man is for the God-man to could die-the natural ability test. Could God the creator of life be the conqueror of death without dying? The Lord Jesus stated that he came down from heaven to earth. As a person on the earth, like any person on the earth, He could die.

Two, the death-killer would experience death. Not only could he suffer death, but he would experience death. A death-killer, who does not experience death, is empty in his talk, in his tongues, in his theories, and in his theologies. To illustrate, I like to buy owls for my mentor. A birdwatcher in England asked me what kind of owl I wanted. I asked in ignorance, "Sir are there really many kinds of owls to warrant your question?" He told me there were 150 kinds of owls! He went on to speak of how owls live and breed and eat. I remarked in surprise, "How do you know so much about owls, their habits and preferences? Were you an owl once yourself"? Of course not. The birdwatcher had an 'owlology' but never had lived in owldom. He had never been an owl himself. Similarly, religious leaders and philosophers have deathologies like the birdwatcher watching owls, but they've not experienced death. They cannot therefore give us solutions to killer death. They can't be death-killers as long as they have not died. But a death-killer would experience death.

I want you to look at the Lord Jesus on this matter as well. He not only came to the earth as a man, he said he came down to give his life for the world. He didn't shun death. He didn't ignore, postpone, or delay his death. Neither did he solicit death. He did not bring it on, speed it up nor merely succumb to killer death. He affirmed the remarkable: "I am going to decide when I lay down my life, and I will pick it up again." He would pass the personal experience test.

The death-killer should conquer death-the third quality of a death killer. Not only could a death-killer die, and would a death-killer die, but he should conquer death. He should

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prove to us that he has conquered death. That's the problem with religious leaders and philosophers. They fail the ultimate victory test. Every one I have studied-gurus and prophets, philosophers and founders of religion have died and stayed dead. They can and does experience death but they stay dead. Unless they resurrect from death back to life again, they can't be trusted with killing death, let alone being trusted for our eternal future. They can't give us directions on how to kill death. Is there some one who has died and resurrected from the dead.

In all of recorded history, there's only one such occasion of a person raising Himself from the dead. That's what the Lord Jesus did. He predicted that he would die and that on the third day he would raise himself from the dead. That prediction is quite easily verifiable and falsifiable. When he rose from the dead on the third day in fulfillment of his prediction, eyewitnesses by the hundreds saw him, touched him, and interacted with him. He spoiled death, by returning to life in the very identifiable, physical body in which he died. Then in first person perspective and self conscious narrative he engaged with those who witnessed his death followed by his resurrection. He was killed, but he passed the ultimate victory test by returning to life in the sphere and scene of pre-death existence. He killed death. Jesus, became the death-killer who met those could, would, and should criteria. He returned to life from the dead, never to die again, and now offers a universal, permanent solution to the human race. He destroyed death and brought life into the view of the entire human race. He welcomes every body who wants to kill death to join up with him. He does not bar anybody from linking up with him as the death-killer, the victor, the winner of life for the human situation. He states in clear terms, "whoever believes on me will not perish but live." No person is banned. You can be from any background, any language, any religion, any caste, any class, any situation, any country, and any ethnicity and can still believe on Him. His explicit invitation and promise to you goes this way: "Every one who looks to me and believes in me shall have eternal life, and I will raise him at the last day." Right now you can entrust your life to Jesus and live for ever. Jesus has the last word on the problem of death.

If you are drawn by this offer and desire to positively respond to this personal invitation to embrace Jesus as your death killer, you would consider these two self-claims by Lord Jesus.

First, look seriously at his very unique and critical claim. The Lord Jesus declared without equivocation, "I am the resurrection and the life". "I am, in myself, I myself, and I'm not pointing to anybody else, nor am I one of many; I am in myself, the resurrection and the life. I am more than the giver of resurrection and life. I am myself the death-killer".

You earlier read the death story of life, but let me quickly narrate the life story of death. Here is a brief version that you want to get straight and correct. Humans were not created to die. We were created to be in absolute, unbroken fellowship with God, to experience maximum life and absolute life forever. But you and I erred. We sinned. We did wrong. At that point of error and sin, we separated ourselves from a relationship with God and

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his intention for us. That separation from God meant both temporal death and eternal death for each one of us. The cause of death is sin and the consequence of sin is death. So the Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven to address the problem of sin by death. When He died, He was paying the penalty of our sin, the cause of our death, so that we don't have to dread physical death anymore. He also paid for the consequence of sin with his death, so that we do not have to face eternal death ever. Since we are part of the human condition, we will physically die. But now that the Lord Jesus has died for the human condition, the significance of physical death is totally different for those who embrace His offer of eternal life.

Jesus' unique and critical claim to personally be "the resurrection and the life," continues in the second part of the same sentence: "any one who believes in me, even though he dies will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never, never die." Reread that assertion. "Any one who believes in me, even though he dies will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never, never die." What is he announcing universally and individually? "If you trust me as your death-killer, you will not face eternal death. You will face physical death because of your human condition as a biological entity, but your eternal situation changes when you trust the One who conquered death to give you life forever. Your upcoming physical death is now simply a gate to go through, but need not be permanent nor eternal separation from God. Your death is not final or eternal. The Lord Jesus promises that you can possess eternal life starting right now, if you entrust yourself into his death-killing life. That is, you can now face death, without having to fear it or force it. Since He finished the reign of death on the human race, any one who moves into His sphere will be eternally spared from being lost forever.

Now how does this death killer's all-time, all people offer of conquest apply to you? Clearly and simply, you now have the final say over death. You possess the last move. To use the basketball analogy, you still have the final shot. The regulation clock may have expired, but sin overplayed you, fouled you before the clock expired. So you still get one shot. What is that final shot, the move, the decision? Just tell God right where you are, as meaningfully and honestly as possible: "I now embrace the Lord Jesus as my death-killer, as the Only God who can save me from my eternal situation of death. I entrust my death-facing life to him alone because He faced death on my behalf and for my sins. I invite His death-killing life into me so I can possess the very life of God, starting at this very moment." You can read over the last few lines one more time if you want to reiterate your trust in the Lord Jesus alone. If you should make that decision, the Lord Jesus will not only help you face your eventual physical death, he will take you through that death as a companion, as your champion. He will escort you through death, because he's been to the other side and returned to give you hope. Philosophers, psychologists, spiritualists, theologians, gurus, prophets, religious leaders and politicians can all speak about death. But not a single one of them has come back from death to never die again. The Lord Jesus offers you the privilege of beating death because he has killed death by His own resurrection. He's already familiar with the territory you will pass through. In fact, he promises to take you through death to an eternal life condition where there'll be no more tears, no more pain, and no more death. Yes, no more death. You read that right. No more

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death!

The worst maritime tragedy in modern history was the sinking of the Titanic. You probably saw the popularized movie version of the disaster. That glamorous ship was advertised as unsinkable. It especially catered to the rich and famous inviting them on her maiden voyage all the way from London to New York. Hundreds of people considered that claim, believed, and got on the boat. There was plenty of celebration in a luxury atmosphere of wining and dining. Sadly, it hit an iceberg in the middle of the ocean. About 3 hours later the unsinkable ship began to sink. You know the rest of the story. Many perished and some were saved.

Did you know that when the ship began to sink, that officers on the boat called and encouraged people to get on to lifeboats. Some of those rich and famous objected to that call. They first denied that ship could sink for it was advertised as unsinkable. Yet, as reality dawned on them, they raised the issue of paying enormous amounts of money to experience luxury accommodations. "You shouldn't put us in cramped life boats," they complained. They delayed their response, they ignored their peril, and they perished. There were also some first class passengers who did get on to life boats, but they were the selfish and the privileged. Afraid that their lifeboats could not carry added weight they kept people out of them. Unfortunately, many lifeboats left with only 15 people when they could have each carried and saved up to 60 people.

In the same way, my friend, humanity is sinking in our deathly situation. The Lord Jesus Christ offers himself as lifeboat for all people. You can deny the deathly situation. You can ignore the danger; you can try to delay the doom. You too may complain saying: "I've paid a lot of money to find a cure for death. I've gone to religious pilgrimages and used up my energies. I've done a lot of good work for humanity. I've fed the hungry, helped the hurting, and built shelters for the homeless. I've provided potable water for the thirsty, worshipped my god(s), followed the rules and ethics of my religions, and even played the part of social entrepreneur to uplift the poor. Do you really mean it's that simple to internally transfer my trust and dependence to Jesus as my lifeboat?"

I know you've done a lot of good, but that doesn't keep you or humanity from sinking into eternal death. Yes, I am bringing a clear saving message to you. Please forgive me for having been so selfish that I did not bring it to you earlier. The Lord Jesus says, "anybody can depend on me, believe on me, and I will rescue him. I will be his death-killer. I have destroyed death and brought life into the full view of the human race."

You too can kill death by entrusting yourself to the death-killer. May I invite you and encourage you to get on the Lord Jesus right now. Wherever you are, just tell him something like, "Lord Jesus, I want you to be my death-killer. I consider, believe, and depend on you as only Savior from sin and death. Please be my death-killer." If you are inclined to this decision or accept Jesus' provision, please contact us. Would you kindly register at www.rameshrichard.com and we will keep in touch with you to cultivate this inclination or confirm your decision.

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You can confront killer-death, humanity's inevitable enemy, by entrusting yourself to the death-killer, humanity's incredible Savior.