

[Home](#) > [The Emendation of A Shi'ite Creed](#) > 21. What Ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far has described about Death

21. What Ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far has described about Death

Abu Ja'far says: "The Chapter of Death: the Commander of the Believers was asked . . ."ash-Shaykh Abu 'Abdillah says: "The chapter is entitled 'Death', yet he deals with something else, whereas it was for him to deal with the reality of death or to entitle the chapter 'On the results of death and how the dead shall fare finally.' "Death is the opposite of life, nullifying growth and making sensation impossible; also it corrupts and obliterates it.

It is the result of the direct act of Allah, the Almighty; and no one has a hand in it or power over it, save Allah, the Almighty. Allah the Almighty, says:

It is He Who gives life and cause to die [40:68].

Hence, He appropriates animation and killing to Himself. Also He, the Exalted, says:

Who created death and life, that He might try you; which of you is fairest in works [67:2].

Life is that which has growth and sensation, and endows the one in possession of it with capacity and knowledge, whereas death is that in conjunction with which growth and sensation are impossible and which deprives the dead of both ability and knowledge. Allah, the Almighty, deals death to His creatures in order to transfer them from the abode of action and trial to that of reward and retribution. Also, He makes none of them die save him for whom He knows that death is better than his continued life, and preserves life only in those for whom He knows that life is better than death.

However, what He deals with His creatures is, in truth, intrinsically good and most beneficial for them. He might put to trial most of His creatures by the severe pangs of death, or He might exempt them from that trial. Moreover, these pangs which precede death might stand as a punishment to those afflicted by them, or it might be that they serve to purify him or others (who are afflicted by them), yet a great advantage might follow from them and a full compensation.

Also, not everyone who suffers severe pangs, before the passing of his soul, suffers them as punishment, nor is everyone who relinquishes his life easily favored and rewarded thereby; also it has been related that the pangs which precede death serve as atonement for believers for their sins, or as a punishment for the unbelievers; also the ease which precedes death is either to seduce the infidels or to serve as reward for the faithful.

Altogether, this is a question whose solution has been concealed to human intelligence; and Allah, the Almighty, has disclosed nothing of it to His creatures, in order to stir them to discriminate between the state of trial and that of punishment, and the state of reward and that of seduction, or in order to increase the severity of the trial to its utmost extent, to accomplish the purpose divinely ordained for creation.

As for what Abu Ja'far mentioned concerning the state which the dead occupy after their death – indeed detailed reports have been handed down concerning it – and what he mentioned was only some of it, which he erroneously listed in this chapter which is of different content. In any event, death is one of the greatest joys which confronts the faithful, since it marks the beginning of his way to the abode of favor, and by the means of which he achieves the reward of the good deeds of his lifetime; whereas, for the infidel it is the first calamity he is confronted with, and the beginning of his way to punishment, since Allah, the Al-mighty, postponed the retribution of his deeds until after his death by the means of which he is transformed from the abode of obligation to that of retribution.

Indeed, the position of the believer, after his death, is more excellent than that before it, whereas the position of the infidel after his death is worse than that before it. This is so, because the believer is going to achieve his reward and the unbeliever is going to receive his punishment.

It has been related from the Family (al) of Muhammad, peace be upon him and his progeny, that "The world is the prison of the believer, the tomb his house, and paradise his abiding place, whereas the world is the paradise of the infidel, the tomb his prison, and hell his abiding place." It is also related from them, peace be upon them, that they said: "Eternal bliss is after death and eternal affliction is after death."

Yet we should be content with what the Qur'an states concerning the final outcome, irrespective of what the narrations say; and what is approved by reason, irrespective of the traditions, since Allah, the Almighty, has plainly stated the reward of the righteous and He has also mentioned the reward of the evil-doers, and enlarged on it; then what He, the Exalted, stated is sufficient without need of anything else.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/emendation-shiite-creed-shaykh-al-mufid/21-what-ash-shaykh-abu-jafar-has-described-about-death#comment-0>