

# The Untimely Death of Kobe Bryant and What We Should Learn From It

I am greatly saddened by the tragic death of Kobe Bryant and his young daughter, but I am just as saddened and grieved by the irresponsible and nonchalant response from the world and even from the church to such misfortune. Untimely deaths of young celebrities like Kobe are supposed to cause a deep pause and sincere reflection of our sinful lifestyles and cause us to earnestly consider the eternal consequences of going off into eternity without Christ.

Instead people are talking incessantly about what a great basketball legend he was and his immortality on the court. I understand recognizing Kobe's talent and honoring what he contributed to the game of basketball, but it's extremely callous not to consider our lives in the light of eternity and speak of that, too.

One tweet said this: "Heroes come and go, but legends are forever. Rest in peace."

Really? Listen, basketball is just a game. Heroes and legends and every other famous person who's ever lived come and go. Kings and mighty rulers of the earth come and go. The rich and the poor alike come and go. Life is very brief on this planet. Let's not forget that there were seven other people who lost their lives in that helicopter crash, not just Kobe and his young daughter. He is getting all the attention and honor because of his celebrity status, but in eternity there is no such regard for greatness in this life as men count greatness.

Yes, I know Kobe's influence stretched far beyond sports, touching art, culture, business and his family. But what does that all matter in the end if he knew not Christ? What does it

profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

In light of Kobe's untimely death and all those who went down with him, it's time to consider again the brevity of this earthly life and the eternal consequences of living a life without Christ.

"Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

C.T. Studd said it this way:

"Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

Leonard Ravenhill also had the right perspective:

"Are the things you are living for worth Christ dying for?"

### **No Earthly Distinctions in the Eternal Realm**

God and Satan are not partial to anyone. There are no distinctions in the eternal realm. Kobe is not a superstar in eternity. They are not celebrating his life and greatness in the game of basketball. The only thing heaven celebrates is the life you lived for Christ. The honor you gave to Christ. The steps and pursuits you made for Christ. The people you led to Christ. Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents.

"Likewise, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

I honestly hope Kobe came to repentance before this fatal crash. I hope he was a real Christian and God found some honor in his heart for Christ; or perhaps he called on the name of the Lord moments before that helicopter exploded in fire. If not, he is experiencing another kind of fire that is eternal where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44).

The God of all flesh has no regard for world celebrities, famous leaders or mighty kings on this earth. Note the word of the Lord to the king of Babylon:

“In the place of the dead there is excitement over your arrival. The spirits of world leaders and mighty kings long dead stand up to see you” (Isa. 14:9, NLT).

The surest thing in the world is not death and taxes; it's death and eternity. Yet we remain so unconcerned. We are not eternity-conscious enough.

Not only are there no earthly distinctions made in heaven concerning our status, position or achievements in this life, but even in the church world God makes no distinctions. There are no church or denominational distinctions in heaven. There is not one section in heaven for Presbyterian Christians, another section for Anglican Christians and yet another for Baptist Christians. Unless a person has sincerely repented of his sins and placed his total trust in Christ for his salvation, proving it by his works, all of life was lived in vain.

### **John Wesley's Dream That Revolutionized His Life**

John Wesley had a dream that affected his life's work tremendously. He dreamed that he died and came to the gate of heaven. He was anxious to know who had been admitted, so he questioned the keeper:

“Are there any Presbyterians here?”

“None,” replied the keeper of the gate.

Wesley was surprised. “Have you any Anglicans?” he asked.

“No one!” was the reply.

“Surely, there must be many Baptists in heaven?”

"No, none," replied the keeper.

Wesley grew pale. He was afraid to ask his next question:

"How many Methodists are there in heaven?"

"Not one," answered the keeper quickly.

Wesley's heart was filled with wonder. The angel at the gate then told Wesley that there were no earthly distinctions in heaven. "All of us here in heaven are one in Christ. We are just an assembly who love the Lord."

Wesley was then taken downward, downward to the entrance of hell. He met the keeper of the gate there.

"Have you any Presbyterians here?" asked Wesley.

"Oh, yes, many," answered the keeper.

Wesley stood still, "Have you any Anglicans?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, many," answered the keeper.

"Are there Baptists in there?" Wesley continued to ask.

"Of course, many," replied the keeper.

Wesley was afraid to ask the next question. "Are there any Methodists in hell?"

The keeper of the gate grinned. "Oh, yes, there are many Methodists here."

Wesley could hardly speak. "Tell me, have you any here who love the Lord?"

"No, no, not one, not one," he answered. "No one in hell loves the Lord."

**Conclusion of All Matters Is to Love and Fear God**

Do you love the Lord? If so, you will have the highest regard and reverence for His holy Word and you will obey what is written therein.

But our obedience to God is not only a manifestation of our love for Him, but also our fear of Him. And frankly, that is what is missing in American culture right now and even within church walls.

“Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

It’s time for America, the church world and all the nations of the earth to fear God, so they can be spared eternal damnation and live a life worthy of the reward of Christ’s sacrifice. It’s time for all of us to realize that there are only two distinctions in the eternal world, the saved and the damned. Those who have received the life of Christ and those who have not.

“Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

I pray for all those close to Kobe, and most especially for his grieving family during this devastating time in their lives. May they find Christ and receive the hope, strength and comfort they so desperately need.