



Signs of Good and Bad Death in Islam: An Analytical Comparative

*Dr. Abubakar Bako

Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6983832

Submission Date: 24th July 2022 | Published Date: 11th Aug. 2022

*Corresponding author: Dr. Abubakar Bako

Abstract

The end of life of a Muslim in Islam is something of great significance, as it tells what will become of that person in the life to come i.e (Hereafter). The good ending signals a life of bliss in the hereafter, while bad ending is an indication of life of misery in the next life. It is on this basis that the paper points out some of the signs of good and bad death and at the same time compare and contrast between them. Therefore, due to the nature and scope of the analytical and interview methods were used when conducting the research.

Keywords: Signs, Good, Bad, Death, Hereafter

INTRODUCTION

In Islam death is not a total nonexistence, but it involves the separation of unity between the body and soul of a living thing. It also shows transference from this worldly life to the afterlife. Allah (S.W.T) described death as one of the greatest catastrophes. This can be seen from the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an.

And the Catastrophe of the death befalls you (then)^[1]

In fact it is the greatest calamity and most momentous disaster that can ever happen to a human being regardless of his status or position.

Death simply means the removal of the soul from the body of the living thing. It is well known fact that everyone is bound to die one day sooner or later. Allah (S.W.T) made it clear in the Glorious Qur'an where He said

Every soul will taste death^[2]

In fact nobody has ever denied that he will die. But the question is always on what will happen after death. Some people claimed that after death nothing will happen except that the dead bodies will rotten away and disappear and will not be rise to life.

No one knows exactly when he will die, or in what land he will die. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, Allah! With Him (Alone) is the knowledge of the Hour, He sends down the rain, and knows that which is in the wombs. No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in what land he will die. Verily, Allah is All-Knower, All-Aware (of things)”^[3]

There are many signs of a good death, which the scholars (may Allah have mercy on them) have outlined from the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings be upon him.)

These signs include the following:

1-Glad Tiding

These glad tidings come to the believers when they are dying. As he (believer) is dying, Allah is pleased with him. On this basis Allah (S.W.T) said in the Glorious Qur'an:

Verily those who say our lord is Allah (Alone); and then they stand firm: on them Angels will descend (at the time of their death) (saying) Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of paradise Which you have been promised^[4].

This is also indicated in the Hadith narrated by Bukhari from the mother of believers Aisha(May Allah be pleased with her) who said the Messenger of Allah said:

Whosoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him, and whosoever hates to meet Allah, Allah hates to meet him.' 'I said'' Oh Prophet of Allah do you mean hating death, for all of us hate death.

''He said'' it is not like that; but when the believer is given the glad tidings Of the mercy and pleasure of Allah, and His paradise, he loves to meet Allah, and when the Kafir is given the tidings of wrath and punishment Of Allah, he hates to meet Allah and Allah hates to meet him^[5].

With regard to the above tradition Imam Al-Nawawi (May Allah have mercy on him) said what this Hadith means is that the love and hate that are referred to here are those that happen when one enters the stage in which repentance is not accepted, where the dying is told of his situation and he is shown his destiny. Whatever the case may be, it is proved by the Qur'an and authentic tradition that when a person is dying tiding would be given to him/her. This may be good tiding or bad depending on his relationship with Allah.

2-Smiling

One of the signs of good death is smiling of the dying person. At the death of Muslim believer, the angels of death come and extend salam (peace) to him at this time the believer is in throes of death he will be smiling because of what he heard and seen. Allah (S.W.T) said:

Those whose life the Angel ends while they are virtuous, Will be saying: peace be with you^[6].

This is supported by the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) which says:

When the soul of a believer is about to leave, the Angel Of death will come to him saying: peace be with you, Friend of Allah! Allah sends greeting to you^[7].

Al-Bara'a Ibn Azib commented on the above verse saying: the angel of death will give peace to a believer upon taking his soul, the angel will never go with the soul before giving him this greeting. The above quotations proved that when a person is dying if he is a believer the angel of death will say salam to him. At this juncture the Angel of death will call the soul to come out gently; it comes from the body like a drop of water sliding off the tip of the spout of a jug. However, the soul of a disobedient person fights back and refuses to leave the body.

3 – Uttering the shaahadah (testimony of faith)

This is also another signs of good death when dying. According to the tradition whoever uttered Kalimah Al-shahadatain at the time of death will enter jannah. Al Hakim narrated that Mu'adh Jabal narrated that Prophet Muhammad said:

He whose last words (in life) were La'ilaha illa Allah None has the right to be worshipped but Allah shall enter Paradise."^[8]

This tradition needs no explanation because nothing is hidden from the wordings and meaning.

4 – Sweating on the Forehead

Dying with sweat on the forehead. This is also another signs of good death, it was reported that when believer is dying sweat will be coming out from his forehead because al-Buraydah ibn al-Husayb (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say, "The believer dies with sweat on his forehead."^[9]

So it is only Muslim believer who died sweating coming out from his forehead.

5– Dying on the night or day of Friday

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "there is no Muslim who dies on the day of Friday or the night of Friday, but Allah will protect him from the trial (fitnah) of the grave."^[10]

As indicated by the above this blessing is only for the Muslims alone, a non-Muslim who dies on this very day cannot be counted.

6 – Dying for the sake of Allah

With regard to the dying for the sake of Allah. Almighty (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an:

“Think not of those as dead who are killed in the way of Allah. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision. They rejoice in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His Bounty and rejoice for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice in a grace and a bounty from Allah, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers”^[11]

In addition to that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was reported to have said.

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever is killed in Allah’s cause he is (regarded as) martyr (He will gain the reward of that a martyr), and whoever dies in Allah’s cause is a martyr .”^[12]

Dying as a martyr is one of the clear signs of good death/ending as indicated by numerous verses of the Glorious Qur’an and ahadith of the noble Prophet.

7 – Dying of the plague

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“The plague is martyrdom for every Muslim.”^[13], while in another tradition He was reported to have said:

It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), said: I asked the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about the plague, and he told me that it is a punishment that Allah sends upon whomsoever He will, and that Allah has made it a mercy for the believers, for there is no one who stays in his land at the time of a plague, bearing that with patience and seeking Allah’s reward, knowing that nothing will befall him but that which Allah has decreed for him, but he will be given a reward like that of a martyr.”^[14]

This is only for the Muslims for the non-Muslims they are excluded from these categories of people.

8 – Dying of a stomach disease.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “... and whoever dies of a stomach disease is a martyr.”^[15]

For the Muslim believers alone who died with this type of illness but he cannot guaranteed jannah because it is only a sign of good ending.

9 – Dying because of being crushed by a falling wall or by drowning

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The martyrs are five: the one who dies of plague, the one who dies of a stomach disease, the one who drowns, the one who is crushed by a falling wall, and the one who is martyred for the sake of Allah.”^[16]

10 – If a woman dies as a result of childbirth, or when she is pregnant

The evidence for that includes the hadeeth narrated by Abu Dawood , according to which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “A woman who dies with child is a martyr. ” al-Khattaabi said: What this means is if she dies with a child in her womb. ‘Awn al-Ma’ bood ^[18].

And Imam Ahmad narrated (17341) that ‘Ubaadah ibn al-Saamit said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us about the martyrs and mentioned among them, “A woman who is killed by the child in her womb attains martyrdom, and her child will drag her by his umbilical cord to Paradise .”^[19].

This is for legitimate pregnancy only illegitimate cannot be counted here.

11 – Dying to defend one’s religion, one’s wealth or one’s life

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever is killed defending his wealth is a martyr; whoever is killed defending his religion is a martyr; whoever is killed in self-defence is a martyr.”^[20] While in another narration by Bukhari and Muslim it says.

Al-Bukhaari (2480) and Muslim (141) narrated that ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: “Whoever is killed defending his wealth is a martyr”^[21].

With this, we can therefore say defending one’s wealth/religion is an act of Ibadah and signs of good death.

12 – Dying guarding the borders of Islam for the sake of Allah

Muslim (1913) narrated that Salmaan al-Faarisi (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Guarding the borders of Islam for one day and one night is better than fasting and praying at night for a whole month, and if he dies (whilst performing this duty), he will go on receiving the reward for this great deed and his provision (continually), and he will be spared the questioning in the grave.”^[22]

Death in the process of guarding land borders for the fear of attack by non-Muslims in the Islamic countries for the sake of Allah is one of the signs of good ending/death and means to jannah.

13 – One of the signs of a good end is dying whilst doing a righteous deed

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever says Laa ilaaha ill-Allah, seeking the Countenance of Allah thereby, and that is the last of his deeds, will enter Paradise. Whoever gives charity and that is the last of his deeds will enter Paradise.”^[23]

This is one the greatest signs of good exit from this material world. These are the signs of good end/death, but despite that we cannot be certain that a specific person is one of the people of Paradise unless the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) testified that he will go to Paradise, such as the four rightly guided caliphs and others stated by the Sunnah.

Bad Death

The meaning of an evil or bad ending is that when a servant is about to die he turns away from his Lord, neglecting that which Allah has made obligatory upon him, and instead turning to that which brings about the wrath and anger of Allah. The repentance of those who die in such state is not accepted by Allah, as He says:

“But repentance is not accepted of those who continue to do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says, “Indeed, I have repented now,” or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them we have prepared a painful punishment^[24].

The signs of an evil ending:

1. Abstaining and refusing to state the Shahadah at the time of death.

This is one of signs of bad death/evil ending in Islam. Islam recommends dictating Shahadah to the dying person as we can see from the Hadith Abu saed Al-khudri (May Allah be pleased with him)

Dictate your dying relatives to testify that there is no god but Allah.^[25]

Islamic scholars commented that dictating shahadah to the dying person is a good tradition that has religious backings. The wisdom behind his testimony becomes last sentence on earth so much so that he would be among the designated people whose last words on earth were kalimah al shahadatain and gets jannah. So therefore abstaining and refusing shahada at the time death is a clear sign of bad death/evil ending.

2. Speaking about sins and evil deeds at the time of death.

This is also another signal for bad death/ending in this world. Saying evil or acting evil at the time when death is approaching person i.e when he is dying is a clear picture of bad exit from this material world.

3. Showing love and attachment to sins and evil deeds at the time of death.

Ibn al-Qayyim (May Allah have mercy on him) was quoted in the book Imam Al-Qurtubi titled Al-Tadhkirah Fi Ahwalil Mawta Wal –Akhirah. It was said to an individual who was approaching death: “say La Ilaha Illa Allah,” so he said: he said “I cannot say it”. Another was told to say La Ilaha Illa Allah,” and he started humming a song. A business man whose trade made him forget the remembrance of Allah was told, when death was imminent to “say La Ilaha Illa Allah,” and he started to say. This is a good piece; this fits you this is a bargain and so on until he died.^[26]

Adh-Dhahabi mentions that there was a man who would sit with drinkers, so when death approached him an individual came to him requesting him to say the Shahadah, so he said to him: “drink and give me to drink.” Then he died^[27].

Adh-Dhahabi also mentions that a man who was known to play chess approached the time of death, so it was said to him: “say La Ilaha Illa Allah,” to which he replied: “checkmate,” and then died. Then Adh-Dhahabi commented saying: “What prevailed over his tongue was that which he became accustomed to during his life of playing games, so in place of the Kalimah of Tawhid he said: checkmate.”^[28]

The Means that Lead to an Evil Ending:

1 .Hoping for Long life.

This is one of the means that lead to bad ending hoping for a long life by Muslim in this regard Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur’an:

Leave them to eat and enjoy and let them be preoccupied with (false) hope. They will come to know^[29].

The above verse clearly shows that one of the signs that may lead to bad ending in the life of an individual is desire and hope for a long life in this material world. In relation to this Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) was reported to have said:

What I fear for you are following your desires hoping for a long life, for following one's desires Makes a man ignore the truth and hoping for Long life makes him forget the hereafter. ^[30]

This statement of Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) is self-explanatory.

Therefore whoever has this in mind would finally fall into devils' hands.

2. Desire for Wealth

This is also another cause for bad death or bad ending in one's life .Allah (S.W.T) made this clear in the Glorious Qur'an where He said.:

Your possessions and your children are only trial (Fitna) And Allah it is with whom is a great reward. ^[31]

The above Qur'anic verse shows clearly wealth in Arabic "Mal" is nothing but trial or temptation i.e fitnah to the possessor. Likewise Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was reported to have said concerning this matter.

Every nation has its Fitnah (Trial or Temptation)
And fitnah of my Ummah is wealth ^[32].

Islamically Muslims were urged or advised to be conscious of God when seeking for wealth otherwise they will end up in the hell fire.

3. Love for Wealth, Wife and Children.

This is also another factor that can cause bad ending in Islam. Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an.

And know ye that you're possessions and your progeny
Are but a trial; and that it is Allah with whom lies your
Highest reward ^[33].

What the verse means is that if the love of these three things is given much attention than obedience to Allah and His Messenger (May peace be upon him) especially women and children then it is fitnah to us but if the love is bound the limit of Islamic law there is no harm to it. Today many men were distracted from Allah's obedience by their wives , children as well as their wealth in this case no doubt these possessions are source of destruction which will lead to bad ending in life.

4. To consign one's self to the Dunya, becoming attached to it, and investing in it through unlawful means

This is also thing that can cause bad ending in this world. Preoccupation with this world, so that it would be enslave by it. Prophet Muhammad (Peace is upon him) issued a wise word to his Ummah concerning this issue where he said:

He is doomed, the slave of dinar and the slave dirham ^[34].

The attitude of preoccupation with this world is very apparent in our contemporary period when material greed and desire to acquire more worthless worldly goods have become worldwide i.e global problem. People are running after lawful and lawful business with the aim of acquiring wealth.

5. Neglecting Ibadat and turning away from guidance.

This is also clear sign that one is heading bad ending when he/she neglecting ibadat and turn away his face from the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

6. To persistence in sinning and delay in repentance.

Falling into sin constantly, if a person persist in committing sin without repentance in his life he would reach a level where he would be addicted to it. When he gets used to it, then he would no longer feel that it is abhorrent. He gradually reaches a stage where he commits sin openly. This is a clear sign to the evil ending. Ibn Kathir says:

"The sins, wrongdoings, and Shahawat (lustful desires) desert a person at the time of death, along with the desertion of Shaitan of him. So desertion along with weak Iman combines against him, and so he falls to an evil ending ^[35].

Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an with regards to this matter

Certainly he led me astray from the reminder after it had Come to me; and the Shaitan fails to aid me ^[36]

So in this case whoever wishes to be saved from evil destruction as well as an evil ending, he /she must keep away from persistence in sin. For him/ she to be successful must keep his heart and tongue busy with the remembrance of Allah. In relation to those who spent their lives with God consciousness in this world when dying Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an.

Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter, and Allah causes the unjust to go astray, And Allah does what He pleases^[37].

The above verse of the Glorious Qur'an has confirmed the above explanations.

Means to Good Ending

There are so many ways of achieving good ending in life as a Muslim believer. The following are some of these ways:-

1. Humbleness

Humbleness of one's self before Allah (S.W.T) is one of the main causes of attaining good ending in life which would give birth to good death. The more the slave humbles himself before Allah (S.W.T) the closer he becomes to Allah. Prophet Muhammad (Peace is upon him) was reported to have said:

The closest slave can be to Allah is when he is
Prostrating to Him, so make lots of dua then ^[38].

In fact closeness to God means God's consciousness and God consciousness will never permit one to be committing sins.

2. Remember death often

Remembering death constantly is a great means of achieving good ending in life. This is because fearing death/ bad ending will motivate the Muslim to be law abiding servant to worship Allah and renew his faith. Prophet Muhammad (Peace is upon him) to have said:

Remember often the destroyer of pleasure (meaning death)^[39]

Remembering death prevents one from committing sin and softens his heart. No one remembers death at the time of difficulties but he will feel ease, knowing fully that nothing last forever. Likewise no one remember death at the time of joy but he will feel restricted. No doubt remembering death regularly is a path/ road to good death/good ending. Imam Qutubi was reported to have said in his book titled "At-Tadkhirah Fi –Ahwalil Mawt wal –Akhirah"

Whoever remembers death regularly will benefit in three ways: he Will hasten to repent, become content, and will be active in worship. Whoever forgets death will be punished in three ways: he will Delay repentance, no longer be content, and become lazy in Worship^[40].

In fact the most effective means to good ending/ good death is by remembering death constantly.

3. Allah's Remembrance

Dhikr is very important factor in dealing with ways for achieving good death/ ending. It cleanses one heart from evil at the same time it is a spirit of righteous deeds. In relation to this Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an :

O you who believe! When you meet a party, then
Be firm, and remembers Allah much, that you may
Be successful^[41].

Allah (S.W.T) promises success to those who remember Him much. On this basis we can say whoever remembers his Lord constantly will have good ending in this world because Allah (S.W.T) promised him success. In fact God's remembrance is a ladder to good death. Whoever wants good ending should be remembering his God constantly through prayers, attending gathering of God's remembrance and so on. In fact by means of Dkhir the slave overcome the devil just as devil overcome one who neglected it.

4 .Self examination

This is also another means or factor that causes good death /ending in one's life as a Muslim believer. Self-examination plays a vital role in renewing one's faith frequently. Allah (S.W.T) says in the Glorious Qur'an:

O you who believe! Be careful of (Your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for Tomorrow, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah Surely Allah is Aware of what you do ^[42].

Here it is Allah (S.W.T) that is calling on believers to evaluate themselves i.e examine their deeds. The secret or wisdom behind self-evaluation is that one will be full aware of his good and bad actions .At the same time a Muslim will amend his wrongs frequently before his death. Umar Ibn Khattab (May Allah is Pleased with him) was reported to have said:

Take account of yourselves before you are called to account^[43].

So as Muslim one must to evaluate himself frequently, if he/she wants good ending/death as well the hereafter in general.

Comparative analysis between Signs of Good and Bad Ending

It is a well-known fact that everyone is bound to die sooner or later. Allah (S.W.T) has made death incumbent and inevitable upon every living creature, be it human being animal or insect. Death is a stage in which the body and soul

become disconnected. As the soul departs human being moves from the first world (Dunya) to the next world (Akhira). One's record of deeds (good/bad) are closed and chance for repentance comes to an end. The following are some of the characteristics and differences shared between good and bad death.

The soul of each and every dying person (good/bad death) will be given glad tidings before it leaves body. However the tidings differed for the good death it is good tidings while for the bad death it is bad tidings. As we can see from the following verse.

Those whom the angels cause to die in a good state
Saying: peace be on you: enter the garden for what
You did^[44].

Likewise in both good / death the dying person experiences pains of death. However the pains differed for the good death it will be soft and easy while for the bad it will be terrible punishment at the time of death, before his soul leaves his body. In the case of shahadah Islam recommends dictating shahadah to the dying person without exception provided he/she is a Muslim. The only difference here is in good death/ending the dying person pronounce shahadah as dictated. While in bad death/ending he abstains or refuses to utter the shahada and instead pronounce worldly issues. Both the two parties experiences death.

CONCLUSION

The causes of good and bad death/ending are many indeed, and it is therefore not possible to mention them all, but what the research paper have listed will give further researchers and readers the impression or signal about others that have not been mention above. This paper has also made a comparison of these signs. Finally signs of good death do not guarantee any one Jannah. Likewise signs of bad death do not guarantee one hell. Only God knows our final abode.

REFERENCES

- ¹ AlQur'an 5:106
- ² .AlQur'an 3:186
- ³ .AlQur'an 31:34
- ⁴ AlQur'an 41:30
- ⁵ M.H Khan, Sahih al-Bukhari, Maktaba Darussalam, Riyadh Saudi Arabia, nd, p112
- ⁶ .AlQur'an 16:32
- ⁷ . I. Qurtubi, AT-TADKHIRA FI-AHWALIL MAWT WAL AL-AKHIRAH, Dar al-manarah, Egypt, 2004, p21
- ⁸ Hadith (Abu Dawud)
- ⁹ Hadith (Muslim)
- ¹⁰ .Hadith (Tirmidhi and Ahmad)
- ¹¹ AlQur'an 3:169
- ¹² Hadith (Muslim and Ahmad)
- ¹³ Hadith (Bukhari and Muslim)
- ¹⁴ Hadith (Bukhari & Muslim)
- ¹⁵ Hadith (Muslim)
- ¹⁶ Hadith (Bukhari & Muslim)
- ¹⁷ Hadith (Abu Dawud)
- ¹⁸ A.M. Mutlaq, The good end of one's life it means portens and Warning for bad end, International publishing house, Darhazm, nd, p12
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p13
- ²⁰ Hadith (Tirmidhi)
- ²¹ Hadith (Bukhari & Muslim)
- ²² Hadith (Muslim)
- ²³ Hadith (Bukhari)
- ²⁴ AlQur'an 4:18
- ²⁵ Hadith (Muslim)
- ²⁶ M. Salih, Weakness of faith, np, nd, p33
- ²⁷ I. Qurtubi, Paradise & hell fire, Darmanarah, Egypt, p119
- ²⁸ Ibid
- ²⁹ AlQur'an 15:3
- ³⁰ M. Salih, Opcit, p43
- ³¹ AlQur'an 64:15
- ³² Hadith (Tirmidhi)

- ³³ AlQur'an8:28
- ³⁴ Hadith(Muslim)
- ³⁵ I.Qurtubi,Opcit,p33
- ³⁶ AlQur'an 25:29
- ³⁷ AlQur'an 14:27
- ³⁸ Hadith(Muslim)
- ³⁹ Hadith(Bukhari)
- ⁴⁰ I.Qurtubi,Opcit,pp35
- ⁴¹ AlQur'an 8:45
- ⁴² AlQur'an59:18
- ⁴³ M.Salih,Opcit,p47
- ⁴⁴ AlQur'an 16:32

CITE AS

Dr. Abubakar Bako. (2022). Signs of Good and Bad Death in Islam: An Analytical Comparative. Global Journal of Research in Humanities & Cultural Studies, 2(4), 159–166. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6983832>