

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE?

FEAR OF DEATH

The fear of death has always plagued mankind. And the modern, sophisticated American is no different from the most primitive savages. His mind softened from an overdose of TV, the modern sophisticated American hurriedly scours the pages of National Enquirer, frantically searching its pages for interviews with those who have died and come back to life.

From the most primitive savage to the modern sophisticated American, the fear of death holds grim sway, leaving its victims quivering skeletons long before they are lowered into the ground or meet the blast of the cremation ovens. Hence this observation from the inspired stylus of the author of Hebrews: Children of flesh and blood "who through fear of death are subject to slavery all their lives" (Hebrews 2:14,15).

How about you, friend? Does fear of cancer cause your mind to melt? Does the fear of a heart attack give you preliminary thrombosis? Does the possible loss of your job because of your political and religious convictions cause your stomach to agitate? Does the possible loss of business due to taking a strong stand for Christ and His church cause your bone marrow to shrivel?

How about you, preacher? Does the possible loss of collection revenues prevent you from preaching about sin? Does the possible defection of more than half of your congregation where you preach cause you to pussyfoot instead of proclaim? Does the fear of earthly authorities cause you to compromise? If your answer to any of these questions is YES, then, brother, you are a slave of the devil who has kept you in bondage through your fear of death.

Drop your National Enquirer. Quit paying attention to those interviews with those silly deceived souls who have met the Outcast Angel — clothed deceptively as an angel of light — in the shadowy realms of near-death. Ignore the testimony of those pitiful souls who are bound for the fires of hell and the immediate torment of Hades, who have been deceived into thinking that everything on the other side of death is Paradise for everyone.

Pick up your Bible. Read there the testimony of the only One who has been to the other side of death, and has come back to tell us about it. Listen to Him who conquered death, not only for Himself, but for all who would obey His gospel!

NETHER-NETHER LAND

Of the Messiah it was written: "For Thou wilt not abandon My soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit" (Psalm 16:10). What is this "Sheol"?

"Sheol" is the Hebrew word used to describe the realm of the grave, and what lies beyond. Sheol describes the nether world, where the spirit and soul of the individual have left the body to moulder, and passed into the world of "the unseen". James said the "the body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). Where does the soul go when it leaves the body? Answer: It goes where Jesus' went when He died on the cross — to Sheol.

On the day of Pentecost, 30 AD, just 50 days following Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and just 10 days following His

ascension into heaven, the apostle Peter stood in the temple and proclaimed for the first time the good news of the Kingdom. Proving that Jesus was crucified was no problem — proving that He was resurrected required more effort. Since he was preaching to a Jewish audience, Peter quoted the Old Testament scriptures in order to back his own eyewitness account of the resurrection. He needed a "Thus says the Lord," to verify his observations to an intelligent, thinking audience. One of those which Peter quoted was Psalm 16:10. "Because Thou wilt not abandon My soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay" (Acts 2:27).

Instead of calling Sheol by its Hebrew name, Peter called the nether world by its Greek name, "Hades". Hades is not the lake of fire that is called "hell". Hell is the Greek word "Gehenna", deriving its name from the garbage dump on the south side of Jerusalem. Hades is the world where the souls of the disobedient go when they die.

In Luke 16, Jesus told the parable of a rich man who died, and of Lazarus, a beggar who used to get the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, and who also died. Of the rich man it is written: "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'" (Luke 16:23,24).

Hades is obviously not some wonderful place, where the soul feels vibrantly free, as some would have you believe the nether world to be. It is a place of torment!

Would the devil like to have you believe that the land beyond death is a perpetual vacationland that everyone will get to go to? Would Satan like to drag you with him into the eternal fire? Is the Pope a Catholic?

How does Jesus know? In the first place, He created Hades; and the second place, He has been there and back. And He is just trying to tell us the way it is.

PARADISE GAINED

Lazarus made it into the comfortable spot in Sheol. "But Abraham said [to the rich man in Hades], 'Child, remember that during your life you received good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'" (Luke 16:25,26).

Lazarus was in comfort; the rich man in agony. Apparently the name for the comfortable place is Paradise. Jesus told the thief on the cross: "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Paul had ascended into Paradise where he heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak (II Corinthians 12:4). No man is apparently permitted to speak of things which he has seen in the nether world. We have Moses, the prophets, and the apostles — hear them, and live!

Paradise is apparently a place where the Christian waits for the resurrection from the dead, apart from his body. Paul wrote: "We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8).

How can you gain Paradise? "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

"You mean that when I die," someone asks, "I don't go to heaven or hell right away?"

"That's right," the answer comes. "When you die you go to Paradise or Hades, depending on whether you have obeyed the gospel or not."

"When do I go to heaven or hell?"

Now hear this: A plain statement of fact in the writings of the New Testament is a plain statement of fact. For instance, the New Testament writings often speak of "the day of the Lord which comes like a thief in the night" (I Thess.5:2). On this day of the Lord which comes like a thief, we are informed that the dead in Christ shall rise, then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16,17).

So when the writers of the New Testament speak of the "day of the Lord which comes like a thief we know which day of the Lord is in view. Listen to Peter then: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up " (II Peter 3:10).

Since a plain statement of fact is a plain statement of fact, it is to be interpreted literally. Peter clearly and plainly says that there is coming a day when Jesus returns that will terminate the planet earth. Furthermore, it is clear that on that day when planet earth is terminated, those in Christ are resurrected. Those who look for literal fulfillment of prophecy would do well to pay careful attention to II Peter 3:10.

There is another plain statement of fact in the New Testament that is worthy of our attention concerning the resurrection of the dead. Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Himself: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,29). Jesus said that an hour was coming, in which all who were in the tombs would come forth. This includes non-Christian dead as well as Christian dead. And Jesus said that this resurrection would occur at an hour. Those who look for literal fulfillment of prophecy would do well to pay attention to John 5:28,29.

We have established this fact: When Jesus returns, all the dead — Christian and non-Christian — shall be resurrected, and the earth will be destroyed.

What happens after the resurrection? Read on.

BEFORE THE JUDGMENT BAR

John described every man's fate in the closing scenes of Revelation. "And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelations 20:11-15).

All the dead — great and small, Christian and non-Christian — will appear before the great white throne. Paul warns Christians about this: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).

Where will you be following your appearance before the judgment seat? If you have believed in Christ (Acts 16:31), if you have repented of your sins (II Peter 3:9), if you have confessed that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9,10), and if you have been immersed to have your sins forgiven and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:12-14; 1 Peter 3:21; John 3:5; Titus 3:5 and others), then your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. All you need to do from that point is to crucify yourself daily, take up your cross, and continue steadfast in the faith — not forsaking the assembling of yourself with the saints on the first day of the week as is the habit of some; and to develop your new creation in the grace of the perfect law. Then your name will remain in the book of life, and you are guaranteed your home in heaven. If you have not obeyed the gospel, you are guaranteed the entire vengeance of God on the day that Jesus returns. "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, He will deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day and to be marveled at among all who have believed..." (II Thessalonians 1:7-10).

A TASTE OF THE RESURRECTION

One of the primary purposes of Christianity is to remove fear of death from the Christian — since Jesus conquered death in His resurrection. Admonitions to the Christian are couched in terms such as not to fear those who can only kill the body, but to fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

The writer of Hebrews speaks of Christians as those who "have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:4,5). The purpose of the "taste" is to wet our appetites for the age to come, and in so doing cause departure from the earth to be an insignificant thing.

Most important among the tastes of the age to come is sharing in Christ's resurrection. We know that at the last trumpet we shall be resurrected — our spirits shall return from their resting and join new bodies as they burst forth from their grave. To prepare us for the security of such an event, God has designed Christian immersion. Not only are we buried with Christ in this obedience of faith, but more importantly, we are also resurrected through the operation of God. "Therefore, we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

God has designed Christian immersion to actually bury the old man with Christ. More importantly, God has designed Christian immersion to actually resurrect the new man with Christ in preparation for the actual resurrection of the body at the end of time.

Those who deny the importance of immersion in salvation deny themselves the God-ordained taste of the resurrection which is yet to come. Those who deny the importance of immersion in salvation deny themselves the security that can rightfully belong to one in Christ, and in so doing work hard in developing man-made schemes of security, such as "once in grace, always in grace". Such man-made substitutes provide futile security now, and will be chaff when the Lord threshes out the hearts of men before the judgment seat.

But for those of us who believe and know the truth, we can press forward in full assurance of faith, knowing that we have already died in Christ and that we have tasted of the resurrection and know that it is good. The faithful Christian has nothing to fear from death, for he knows where he is going, and that nothing can separate him from the love of God.

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15).

WHAT HAPPENS

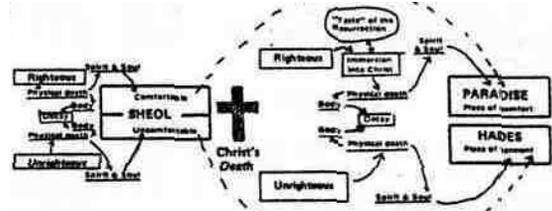
WHEN

YOU DIE?

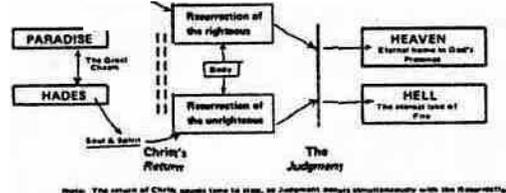
by Jay Wilson



JOURNEY OF THE SOUL FROM LIFE TO THE NETHER WORLD



JOURNEY OF THE SOUL FROM THE NETHER WORLD TO JUDGMENT AND BEYOND



Published by
11th HOUR PRESS
P.O. Box 635 Bozeman, MT 59715