

Revelation's HOPE

Lesson 17: The Keys of Death and Hades

I. Introduction

I was attending junior college and had a very interesting experience. It seemed that every so often a self proclaimed atheist and I would cross paths. What inevitably resulted was an interesting conversation to say the least! One time we were discussing life plans. I asked him about his college plans, job prospects, etc. until we got down to retirement. He hoped in retirement to spend time with family and travel extensively. I asked him, then what do you plan to do? The "What then?" question never entered his mind when it came to what would happen after retirement. He shrugged and said, "I guess I die". To him that was it. Death was THE END.

- A. Is death the end?
- B. Are the dead asleep until a resurrection?
- C. Are they already in heaven with Jesus?
- D. Are they in a worse option than all of these: Purgatory or hell?

II. Revelation's Answer

A. **Revelation 1:18** – Jesus holds the keys of "Death and Hades": HE KNOWS THE ANSWER! After all, He is both the Creator and re-Creator!

B. Facts about Life and Death

- Dust + Breath = man became a living soul / person (**Genesis 2:7**)
- **Ezekiel 18:4** – a soul can die, so death is the undoing of Creation.
- One shock: There is no such thing as a living soul.
- Look at the way Jesus uses the word "soul" / "life" (**Matthew 16:25**).
- God is immortal (**1 Timothy 1:17**)
- God alone has immortality (**1 Timothy 6:15-16**)
- Breath returns to God who gave it (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**).
- "Breath" = ruach in the Hebrew. It can mean "wind", "breath" or "spirit".
- We will praise God all the while our breath is in us, and the spirit of God is in our nostrils (**Job 27:3**).
- We are not conscious at death (**Psalms 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6**).
- Death is a sleep (**Psalms 13:3; 1 Kings 2:1, 10; John 11:11-14**)
- There is a resurrection day (**John 11:23-25; Colossians 3:3-4**)
- The dead do not have any more part under the sun (**Job 14:21**)
- The dead do not praise the Lord (**Psalms 115:17**)
- We are given immortality when we are changed at the resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:51-52**).

C. What about the thief on the Cross?

- Did Jesus go to paradise that day? No (**John 20:15-17**)

- **Luke 23:43** – It depends on the punctuation, No commas or punctuation in the original. . .Where do you put a comma? Depends on your understanding of the passage, chapter, book and Scripture!
- σήμερον [considering / concerning what has happened today]
- Paradise not Kingdom. “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (**Rev 2:7** NIV).
- Since KJV and other early translations into English had the understanding of the immortal soul, this crept into their way of translating the Greek text.

D. What about the Rich man and Lazarus

- **Luke 16:1-31**: Audience is rich people who want to criticize Jesus. The law of end stress that is seen in Jesus’ parables brings us to the main point: *‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’* **There are Problems with taking this literally:**
- Bosom – kolpos, “front of the body between the arms” (*Thayer*).
- Those in the flames “see” those who are in paradise and are within shouting distance.
- Those who suffer in the flames suffer physically. Water cannot quench thirst.
- Jesus is clear on what HE teaches about life after death: “Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live” (**Joh 5:25** NIV).
- Jesus was taking their own beliefs and using it to make a point:
- Robert Stein, Introduction to the Parables of Jesus (page 85). “Jeremias even recounts a rabbinic story of a rich tax collector, Bar Ma’jan, who was received into heaven because he once made a banquet for the city councillors and when they refused to attend, he invited the poor to eat, that the food not be wasted”.

E. The Way to Life after Death

- **1 Cor. 15:55, 57** – We conquer through Jesus!
- **Revelation 20:6** – We have part in the 1st Resurrection
- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** – at HIS voice the graves open (like a key)
- Reunions abound as we go up together.
- **Revelation 22:5** – we reign forever and ever.

III. Other understandings of Death

A. John Edwards June 14, 2000: “I’m John Edwards, I talk to dead people”

B. J.Z. Knight of Yelm, WA claims to be Ramtha who lived 3,500 years ago

“I Ramtha, the enlightened one, know that I am God and you do not know that you are God. I know what you know.”

J.Z. Knight said, “I’m going to Safeway.”

Ramtha, “What’s Safeway?”

Knight, “A market where you buy groceries.”

Ramtha, “What’s Groceries?”

C. Who are they communicating with on the “other side”?

- **Isaiah 8:19** – we should ask God not the dead!
- **Isaiah 8:20-22** – if we consult the dead it gets pretty dark.
- **1 Chronicles 10:13** – Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord. How? He consulted a medium for guidance!
- **Deut. 18:10-12** – Detestable to consult the dead.
- They consulted forces of darkness = demons!
- Why not trust what the Bible says instead of these experiences? Why not trust that Jesus holds the keys of death an Hades (**Rev. 1:18**)?

D. Our Choices

- Trust Him!
- Place your life in His hands and He will not let you down!
- Enoch, Elijah, Moses, 24 Elders and JESUS trusted in life after death!
- He will not let you be deceived either!
- Do you see that the Bible teaches that death is a sleep until Jesus comes?
- Do you wish to trust Him with your life and loved one(s)?

Supplement: Absent from the Bodyⁱ

Paul makes an interesting statement in **2 Cor. 5:8**, “As long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord... I... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

Upon close examination, in the context of those words (vs. 1-8), we discover that Paul is not saying that when he dies and leaves his body he will immediately be with the Lord. “Now we know that if the earthly tent [earthly body] we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands [a new imperishable body]. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed [to live as a spirit without a body] but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling [our new immortal body], so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

All Paul is saying here is that he longs to be out of his earthly body and put on the new one that God promised. However, he makes it clear in **1 Corinthians 15:52-53** that we do not receive the new imperishable, immortal body until the Last Trumpet - when Jesus comes. In fact, he made it very clear that he does not wish to live without a body [unclothed], which would be the case if he believed the dead went to heaven in spirit form.

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