

Revelation's Keys to Death

Let's begin our study with a story.

During the Vietnam War Mrs. Reynolds in Pennsylvania prayed daily for God to protect her son as he served with the U.S. Army there. Each morning she would go to the mailbox, hoping to find a letter from Dwight. He wrote such cheerful letters, reminding her that he would come home in a few months and seldom complaining about combat conditions. One day the letters stopped coming. Three weeks passed without word from Dwight. Then on a beautiful Pennsylvania fall morning a military staff car stopped in front of Mrs. Reynolds house. An officer emerged, walked stiffly up the walk, and handed her the telegram. With an embarrassed "I'm sorry, ma'am," he disappeared while she read through her tears, "Your son has been reported missing in action and must be presumed dead." Mrs. Reynolds simply couldn't believe it. She had faithfully prayed for her son. Why did he die?

A few days later a woman from down the street came to visit her. "Why don't you come over to my house this Tuesday night?" she asked. "We have a group that meets then, and we talk to our loved ones who have died. They communicate with us." "Oh, no!" Dwight's mother protested. "I don't believe the dead can get in touch with us." "Well," her friend replied, "All I know is that we do talk to our loved ones, and they talk to us." After her visitor left, Mrs. Reynolds thought of their conversation. Oh how much she missed Dwight! How good it would be to hear his voice again!

A week later her neighbor returned. "Guess what!" she announced, "Last night when we met, your son appeared. He felt hurt that you didn't want to meet him." The next Tuesday evening Mrs. Reynolds sat expectantly on her chair waiting for her son. A half dozen other people waited with her. Shortly after the meeting began, she saw him! The form remained indistinct, but it was definitely Dwight!

"Hi, Mother," he said quietly. They talked together for almost an hour and made an appointment to meet again a week later. For six months mother and son "Visited" each Tuesday evening. Mrs. Reynolds went to her minister and told him what she was doing. She felt he and the church had deceived her about death. She had "Proof" now that the dead indeed can communicate with the living. She requested the church to remove her name from the membership record.

Each Tuesday night Mrs. Reynolds eagerly looked forward to the session with Dwight. They talked of many things known only to the two of them, leaving her with no doubt that she could maintain contact with her dead son.

One Friday morning the doorbell rang, and when she answered it, there stood Dwight, smiling and with outstretched arms. "Why are you here, Dwight?" Mrs. Reynolds blurted out in confusion. "We're not supposed to meet again until Tuesday." "What are you talking about, Mother? I'm home! Here I am!" At last Mrs. Reynolds understood that Dwight in flesh and blood stood before her, and she threw her arms around him.

They discovered that the War Department had made an error in transmitting information. Dwight had not been killed in combat at all but had been separated from his unit for some time. Because the wounds Dwight had received which required treatment at a base hospital, he could not write home until time to return to the United States. The new information had never appeared on his records.

"But, whom have I been talking to for the past six months?" Mrs. Reynolds wanted to know. That's a good question isn't it!

In this study we want to know what the Bible teaches on the subject of death.

Revelation 1:18

*“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and **have the keys of hell and of death.**”*

Here Jesus tells us that He has “The keys of hell and of death.” The word “Hell” is the Greek word “*Haidēs*” which means the grave. Jesus has the power over death and the grave. He also gives us this promise that after hell fire, that there will be no more death or sorrow.

Revelation 21:4

*“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be **no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:** for the former things are passed away.”*

Let’s go to where it all began.

Genesis 3:1-4

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Notice, Satan is using God’s Word to try to deceive her!

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:”

It’s true the deception, “You shall not surely die” has been around since the Garden of Eden! It all comes down to, who we believe, God or Satan. God said they would die, Satan said they wouldn’t! Who was right? **God was!** We can always trust what God says. Let’s explore what God’s Word says about what happens at death.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-21

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

As we look at the Strong’s Concordance we find that the word, “**Breath,**” (vs. 19) and the word, “**Spirit,**” (vs. 21) are the same Hebrew word.

Breath - Strong’s number 7307 ruwach (roo'-akh); from 7306; wind; by resemblance breath...
Spirit - Strong’s number 7307 ruwach (roo'-akh); from 7306; wind; by resemblance breath...

By understanding this, we see that Solomon is telling us that, when we die, our body returns to the dust. In verse 21, he asks the question, “Who knoweth the spirit (breath) of man that goeth upward, and the spirit (breath) of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” Let’s continue our journey to see what else God says on this subject.

Psalms 146:4

*“His **breath** goeth forth, he **returneth** to his earth; in that very day his **thoughts perish.**”*

When our breath, or spirit, leaves and our body returns to dust, our thoughts perish!

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6

*“For the living know that they shall die: but the **dead** know not **any thing**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their **love**, and their **hatred**, and their **envy**, is now **perished**; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”*

What are love, hatred, and envy? **They are feelings!** The Bible describes death, as the breath leaves, our bodies return to the earth (dust) and our thoughts and feelings are gone. What would life be without feelings or thoughts? It continues in verse 10...

Ecclesiastes 9:10

*“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no **work**, nor **device**, nor **knowledge**, nor **wisdom**, in the **grave**, whither thou goest.”*

Are we catching what the Bible is teaching about when we die? We go to the same place as animals, the earth!

Our thoughts perish.

Our love, hated and envy are perished (all of our feelings)

Our knowledge is gone!

Our Wisdom is gone!

What would we be like with no thoughts, feelings, knowledge, or Wisdom? **We would be dead.** Let's now go to the New Testament and see what the disciples say about death...

Acts 2:29

*“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch **David**, that he is both **dead** and **buried**, and his **sepulchre** is with us unto this day.”*

Acts 2:34

*“For David is **not ascended** into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,”*

David was the Jews' favorite king. Jesus came from the root and offspring of David. Yet, on the day of Pentecost, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaims that David is dead and buried and is in the tomb, **not ascended to heaven**! Notice, what Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

1Thessalonians 4:13-18

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are **asleep**, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”*

The Bible refers to people that have died as, “Asleep.” This is because it isn't permanent! We will be raised either at the resurrection of the just or the resurrection of the wicked.

Vs. 14-18

*“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the **voice** of the archangel, and with the **trump** of God: and the **dead** in Christ shall **rise first**: Then we which are **alive** and **remain** shall*

*be caught up **together** with **them** in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*

When do the righteous dead rise? In this passage we see that the righteous dead will rise **when Jesus comes again**. Praise God! We will be reunited with our loved ones! Jesus talked about two resurrections, the first, for the righteous, when He comes, and the second, for the wicked, after the 1000 years.

John 5:28-29

*“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all that are in the graves** shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

Notice, Jesus says they will hear Him from the Graves! (Not Heaven) Remember, we have learned, through this study, that the dead are not able to think, feel, or have knowledge or wisdom. Can you imagine what it would be like to be in Heaven and not think or feel? Not to have any wisdom or knowledge? No, Jesus has the best plan. Job asks a good question in...

Job 14:10

“But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”

Job 14:13-14

“O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”

Did you notice that Job asked to be hid in the “Grave?” He said he would wait until his change came. **What change is Job talking about?**

1 Corinthians 15:51-54

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

When is the last Trump? **At the second coming of Jesus!** When are the dead raised? **At the 2nd coming of Jesus.** The Bible says, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:” 1Thes. 4:16

When Jesus comes again, we will be raised from the dead and **then we will receive immortality**. Mortal means subject to death, Immortal means not subject to death. The Bible says that only Jesus has immortality, but when He comes again, He will give all His faithful ones immortality-They will never die again!

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”

In Verse 23 it says, “***They that are Christ’s at His Coming.***” **Not at Death!** The Bible clearly defines death as a sleep, in which, when we die, we simply rest in the grave until Jesus comes.

In the story of Lazarus we see this once again.

John 11:11-14

“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

Notice that Jesus says that Lazarus is sleeping, even though He says plainly “***Lazarus is dead!***”

Vs. 21-25

“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:”

Another interesting fact we see from these Scriptures, is that Jesus tells Martha that her brother “will rise again.” Look at Martha’s understanding of when her brother would rise again. “***I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.***” Martha did not believe that her brother was in heaven, even though Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus’. Jesus asks them to take Him to the grave where Lazarus is laying. He then tells them to roll the stone away, and then prays to His Father in heaven. Then...

Vs. 43

*“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, ***Lazarus, come forth.***”*

Did you notice that Jesus did not call Lazarus DOWN! He called him “***FORTH!***” Lazarus wasn’t in heaven, even after four days, he was resting (sleeping) in the grave, like everyone else that has died.

Remember Jesus’ promise in John 14:1-3

John 14:1-3

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, ***I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.***”*

Jesus tells us that when He comes the second time with power and great glory, He will then raise the dead (receive them) and gather all the righteous, both living and those just resurrected, back to heaven to live with Him.

Now, you might say, “I thought the Bible taught that when we die we go to heaven!” Let’s have the Bible answer some misunderstood texts on this subject. We have all either thought or heard that when we die we return to God, but let’s look at this text.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

The word, “**Spirit**” here in the Hebrew means, “**Breath.**” Our bodies return to dust and our breath returns to God. Have you ever been in Heaven? **NO!** Can you return to Heaven? **NO!** You can’t return to somewhere you haven’t been! So let’s see how the Bible explains it.

Genesis 2:7

*“And the **LORD** God **formed man** of the **dust of the ground**, and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man **became a living soul.**”*

The word here for, “**Soul**” in the Hebrew means, “**Breathing creature**” The deception, that Satan wants us to believe, is that we are made up of a Body + Spirit + Soul, which = ?

The Bible says that, the Body + Breath (spirit) = “**a Living Soul**” or, as the Hebrew puts it, a “**breathing creature.**” **You see you don’t have a soul, you ARE a soul--a breathing creature!** That’s why during the seven last plagues, the Bible says in Revelation 16:3 “*And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: **and every living soul died in the sea.***” You see, everything that has a body and breath (mankind, animals, etc.) IS A SOUL!—A BREATHING CREATURE! If you take away the breath, you simply have a corpse. When the Lord takes our breath away, we are dead and rest in the grave, until Jesus comes. Job helps us in understanding this word “spirit.”

Job 27:3 *“All the while my **breath** is in me, and the **spirit of God** is in my nostrils;”*

Let’s look at another text that is often misunderstood.

Luke 23:42-43

*“And he said unto Jesus, **Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.** And **Jesus** said unto him, **Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**”*

Many, today, want to say the thief went to heaven that day, and, at first look, you might say, that’s what it sounds like. But, remember, the Bible is in harmony and this concept doesn’t line up with the other texts that describe death, does it? **NO!** So, let’s allow the Bible to explain it for us.

The first thing is where is paradise?

Revelation 2:7

*“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **To him that overcometh** will I give to eat of the **tree of life**, which is in the **midst of the paradise of God.**”*

Paradise is Heaven. Our next two texts reveal something about Jesus death and resurrection.

John 19:32-33

*“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to **Jesus, and saw that he was dead already**, they brake not his legs:”*

John 20:17

*“**Jesus** saith unto her, **Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:** but go to my brethren, and say unto them, **I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.**”*

Jesus died on Friday, and, now, on Sunday morning, Jesus says that He hadn’t been to Heaven yet! So how could He meet the thief there on Friday? **The explanation is simple!** The punctuation didn’t come

in until the mid 1400s AD; therefore, we find, if the punctuation is put in the right place, it matches all the other Scriptures we have studied. Let's look.

Luke 23:42-43

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

When we realize that punctuation is not inspired, but was added in later, we see that, by simply putting the comma, in verse 43 after, “Today,” instead of before it, Jesus was simply promising him salvation, that day!

As an example, notice the following sentence:

“A woman, without her man, is nothing.”

Then we will move the comma from after man to after her.

“A woman, without her, man is nothing.”

Can you see how the punctuation can totally change the meaning? As we take this passage of Scripture in context, we find Jesus promising the thief salvation, that day! It then matches everything else in Scripture on this subject.

Another text that is misunderstood is found in 2 Corinthians 5:8 where it says, “*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*” You might say, see, when I leave my body at death, I am present with the Lord!

There are two things to consider:

1. Since the Bible is in harmony, does this text match every other text we have looked at on this subject? If not, then we need to assume we don't understand what the writer was saying.
2. We need to look at the context of the Scripture and see what the writer was trying to say. Was Paul trying to give us an explanation on the subject of what happens when we die?

In verse 6 Paul says, “*Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:*” Is Paul intending this passage to mean that while we are alive and living in our bodies, that we can't be with Christ? No, Paul is not trying to give us an explanation of what happens when we die, but rather how we ought to LIVE! (Read the whole chapter) For he continues in verse 10 to say “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*” Then again starting in verse 15, he describes how to live for Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:15-20

“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

Key Points:

1. V.15 – “Live unto Him which died for them and rose again.”
2. V.17 – “He is a new creature: old things are passed away;”
3. V. 19 – “Hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”
4. V. 20 – “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.”

All of these passages tell us about life and how we are to LIVE for Christ! As we see Paul is not trying to help us understand what happens to us when we die, but rather how we should live. Paul uses several different words to describe our carnal nature. He uses the words carnal man, natural man, versus being in the spirit. This is one more way in which he is describing the surrendering of the carnal nature and taking on the spiritual nature, by letting the Holy Spirit dwell in us. Notice what he says in the letter to the people of Colossae.

Colossians 2:5

*“For though I be **absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit**, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.”*

Paul, in prison, writes to the people of Colosse, using the same terminology, “*absent in the flesh (body), yet am I with you in the spirit.*” After all, if we say Paul is telling the people at Corinth that when they die they go right to heaven, why would he tell the people at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 that they wouldn’t get to go to heaven until Jesus comes!

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (KJV)

*“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not **prevent (means to precede)** them which are asleep. For **the Lord himself shall descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them** in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*

Paul tells the Thessalonians that the righteous are all going to heaven TOGETHER! Both the Righteous that have died, and the Righteous that are living when Jesus comes. Notice how the New Living Translation puts it.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (NLT)

*“I can tell you this directly from the Lord: **We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves.** For **the Lord himself will come down from heaven** with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. **First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever.** So comfort and encourage each other with these words.”*

As you can see, Paul is consistent with what he is saying, we just need to let the Bible do the interpreting, instead of trying to do it ourselves.

Another area of deception is that we don’t really die, but that we continue to live in a spirit world. We have already studied that the Bible clearly defines death as a sleep. Our feelings, emotions, thoughts, knowledge, and wisdom, all perish when we die. We have also learned that the word, “Soul” in Hebrew means, “Breathing creature.” To say that we continue to live, even though we have died, is to claim to be immortal. The Bible gives us a clear answer to this claim.

Ezekiel 18:4

*“Behold, **all souls are mine**; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die.”*

1 Timothy 6:15-16

*“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the **blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”*

As we can see from the Scriptures, only Jesus has immortality! The rest of us won't become immortal until Jesus comes back to get us. That's why Jesus tells us in...

John 14:1-3

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to **prepare** a place for you. And if I go and **prepare** a place for you, I will come again, and **receive** you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*

As you can see, the Bible is in harmony! Death is simply a sleep! You can see that the Bible has one teaching on Death and, when all texts are understood, they are in harmony! We sleep until Jesus comes again! That's why Paul and John both warn us of spiritual deceptions.

1 Timothy 4:1

*“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, **giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;**”*

1 John 4:1

*“**Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:** because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”*

Understanding this topic helps us to not be deceived in the last day by the “*spirits of devils.*” Just think of what it will be like when Jesus comes again! He will raise our loved ones up from the grave, just like He did Lazarus. We will then be able to go with Jesus back to heaven together! What a day that will be!