



DISCOVERING REVELATION

Revelation's Keys of Death

If you want the truth about death, the best source of information is Someone who has been there. In Revelation 1:18, Jesus assures us that He has passed through death, is now alive forevermore, and has the keys to death and hell!

Ecclesiastes 12:7 gives us the Bible formula for death: When we die, our bodies return to dust, and our “spirit” goes back to God. Genesis 2:7 gives us the opposite formula. When God first created life, He took dust, breathed into it “the breath of life” and man **BECAME** a living soul. The “spirit” of Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the “breath of life” of Genesis 2:7 are synonymous. Our “spirit” is the “breath” or the gift of life that God gives to us. Job 27:3 informs us that the “spirit of God” is in our nostrils. Sometimes the word “spirit” in the Bible simply refers to “breath.”

The Bible’s formulas for life and death are simple:

DUST + BREATH OF LIFE = LIVING SOUL

LIVING SOUL - SPIRIT/BREATH = DUST

According to the Bible, we do not *have* a soul, we *are* a soul (Genesis 2:7). When we die, we simply rest in the grave until Jesus returns. Psalm 146:3, 4 tells us that after we die, we no longer have any thoughts. Psalm 115:17 clearly states that the dead “do not praise the Lord.”

Job 7:9, 10; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 and Ecclesiastes 9:10 all make it very clear that once we are dead, we stop functioning. We have no thoughts, we experience no emotions, we have no wisdom or knowledge, and we have nothing to do with this earth anymore.

In John 11:1-14, when Lazarus died, Jesus referred to it as a “sleep”—a description of death used by the Bible more than 50 times! In John 11:23, 24, we see what people in Jesus’ day understood to be the truth about death: Martha expected that she would see her brother again after the resurrection on the *last day*. This is the teaching on the subject of death all through the Bible. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 makes it clear that the dead sleep until the Second Coming, when Jesus will open the graves and raise the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 teaches that the dead who are sleeping will be raised at the last trump and given glorious, immortal resurrection bodies like the one Jesus rose from the dead with (compare with Philippians 3:20). Peter ran into trouble with the Pharisees because he was preaching the hope of the resurrection (Acts 4:1, 2).

Nowhere does the Bible teach the concept of an “immortal soul.” 1 Timothy 6:15, 16 makes it clear that only God is immortal. We are not! In fact, Ezekiel 18:4, 20 states unequivocally that “souls” that sin will die! (Remember: The wages of sin is *death*, Romans 6:23.)

So what actually happens when we die? Job 14:12-14 gives an excellent summary: (1) We sleep until the heavens be no more, (2) we are resurrected when the wrath of God is past, and (3) we rest in the grave until

our change comes. These things all happen in connection with the Second Coming of Christ! (See Revelation 6:14; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 15:1; and 1 Corinthians 15:51.) Job didn't expect to live again until the return of Christ!

The concept that the dead do not really die comes straight from the serpent's mouth. Satan has always tried to downplay the consequences of sin. "Ye shall not *surely* die," he told Eve (Genesis 3:1-4). But the Bible clearly teaches that death is really death. Notice in Acts 2:29, 34 that Peter publicly taught that David is not in heaven yet! He will remain in the grave until Jesus returns to give out our eternal rewards (Revelation 22:12). In 2 Timothy 4:7, 8, when Paul realized that he was about to die, he told Timothy that he expected his reward on "that day"—the day of Jesus' "appearing." When Jesus comes, death will lose its sting. That is why Paul tells us to "comfort one another" with the teaching of the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Finally, on that glorious morning, we will be able to say, "Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

HANG ON A MINUTE! WHAT ABOUT . . .

(1) Luke 23:42, 43 — In this story, Jesus seems to tell the thief that he will be joining Him in heaven that very day. There are three problems with that understanding:

- The thief asks to be remembered when Jesus sets up His kingdom. That doesn't happen until the Second Coming—remember the stone in Daniel 2?
- Jesus didn't go to heaven that day. John 20:17 informs us that three days later, Jesus still had not been to heaven!
- The thief didn't die that day. John 19:30-34 tells us that at sundown, they had to break the thieves' legs because they were *still alive*.

So how do we understand Luke 23:43? It's simple. There was no punctuation in the original Greek; move the comma, and the verse makes more sense: "And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise.'" The *promise* was made that day. The fulfillment of that promise takes place when Jesus returns.

(2) 2 Corinthians 5:8 seems to tell us that the moment we die, we go to be with the Lord. However, when you consider that elsewhere (1 Thessalonians 4; 1 Corinthians 15) Paul clearly taught a *resurrection*, to make this passage teach an immortal soul is to take it out of context. Read it in the context of what comes before it (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Paul talks about three possible states of being:

1. "Our earthly house," "at home in the body," "in this we groan." This is speaking of the earthly, corruptible bodies that we have right now.
2. "A building of God," "a house not made with hands," "eternal in the heavens," "our house which is from heaven." This is speaking of the glorious resurrection bodies we will receive when Christ returns.
3. "Unclothed," "naked." This is the state of human beings when they are between their earthly and their heavenly house. We are dead. We are naked. We have no home.

With the context of the rest of Scripture, it is impossible to read an "immortal soul" into this passage. In verse 8, Paul is simply saying that he would rather be absent from his *earthly* body and present with the Lord. There is no time frame given. He desires to be present with the Lord *in the heavenly body or "house"* (see verse 1). It doesn't say that he will be present with the Lord without a body!

DEATH AS A SLEEP

Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21, 2:10, 11:21, 11:43, 14:20, 14:31, 15:8, 15:24, 16:6, 16:28, 22:40, 22:50; 2 Kings 8:24, 10:35, 13:9, 13:13, 14:16, 14:22, 14:29, 15:7, 15:22, 15:38, 16:20, 20:21, 21:18, 24:6; 2 Chronicles 9:31, 12:16, 14:1, 16:13, 21:1, 26:2, 26:23, 27:9, 28:27, 32:33, 33:20; Job 7:21, 14:12; Psalm 13:3, 76:6; Jeremiah 51:39, 51:57; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 9:18, 9:23-24, 27:52; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52-53; John 11:11-14; Acts 7:60, 13:36, 1 Corinthians 11:30, 15:6, 15:18, 15:20, 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 5:9-10; 2 Peter 3:4