

The Dead Are Asleep

Pastor Sheldon Emry

Several centuries ago, the great men of the Protestant Reformation, such as Martin Luther and John Wesley, taught ‘the dead are asleep.’ Today, their supposed followers are now taught the Roman Catholic doctrine of ‘the dead are alive.’ I do believe that our people could not have been so easily-fooled in the last fifty years by the false ‘rapture’ doctrine if they had not first been conditioned to believe that the dead are alive now, either in heaven or hell.

God spoke to ancient Israel, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”* **Hosea 4:6a** He meant, of course, lack of the knowledge, which was available to them in God’s Word. So, in the next phrase, God said to Israel, *“Because thou hast rejected knowledge I will also reject thee.”* **Hosea 4:6b**

In all of the Old Testament law and historical books we find no instance of God turning away from Israel, or allowing calamities to come upon them, except when Israel turned from God’s Word.

This is our situation today. From the early 1600’s until the early 1800’s, God blessed the people of North America as no other people had ever been blessed. He opened up a vast land rich in soil and natural resources; a land with an exceptional climate over most of its area for the production of vast agricultural harvests. God’s spirit brought into the hands of Americans ideas and inventions that amazed both our own people and the world.

While millions in Asia and Africa had not enough to eat, America had an abundance. While the rest of the world carried its burdens on human heads and human backs, America went from the horse to the train, to the truck and to the plane in less than three centuries. While the rest of the world sent messages by runners, horse-

back riders, smoke signals and drums, America and our white racial brethren invented and developed the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, and the satellite.

While men contemplate in fantasy and fiction what life and civilization might be like on other planets, they failed to notice that right here on the earth, the races of Asia and Africa differ from the race of Western Europe (and the places they spread out to) almost as much as if we, too, had our origins in different galaxies. Why?

Why such a disparity between what we know as Western Civilization, and the Eastern and African cultures? God willing, I will be answering some of that at another time. Right now, I want to continue that thought, where God told Israel they were destroyed for lack of knowledge, and that destruction had come because they rejected His Word. How about a parallel in our modern nation?

In spite of what I’ve just said about the seemingly superiority of our culture, of our blessings, intelligent people can see that our superiority and our blessings are disappearing. Our wealth is turning to debt. Our health has turned to illness, disease and untimely death. Our blessings of the womb, our children, are not mentioned anymore. Instead we have abortions and a declining birthrate. Our powerful military which dominated the world a generation ago, is spoken of in terms of disarmament, of coexistence, and of combination with our enemies.

Christian morals, the sanctity of the home, and Bible standards for our social life have been covered with the smear of pornography, of violence and rape, of sodomy and murder. Where two generations ago drunkenness was frowned upon, and a drunkard was an object of pity and scorn, now 25% drink to excess, 5% of the pop-

ulation are alcoholics, and tens of millions use mind-altering drugs on a regular basis.

I don't think there would be too much argument if I stated that this nation has rejected God's Word. But what if I suggested that God has rejected our people? How would you answer?

I have previously covered subjects like the 'secret rapture' and 1 Thessalonians 4, where Christians who had already died, were spoken of as asleep. The teaching that 'Christians go to heaven as soon as they die' is a false doctrine, so I will run through a few passages of Scripture on the state of the dead.

You can listen to our taped sermons "Spirit-life, a Destroying Doctrine, (#7506)" and a series titled, "The Burning Hell, is it Bible Truth or is it Blasphemy? (#7604)" They prove from the Bible that the dead are asleep, and they are unconscious. They are neither in the 'Heaven' of the churches, nor in the 'Hell' of the churches. They are exactly where the Bible says they are: asleep, unconscious, and will remain so until the day of resurrection. If you've never heard this doctrine before, keep reading!

HELL

The English word 'hell' is in the Old Testament 31 times. It comes from the Hebrew word 'sheol,' but the King James translators, also, translated 'sheol' 31 times into the word 'grave'. So, in effect, they used the words 'hell' and 'grave' interchangeably.

The Saxon word 'hell,' 300 years ago simply meant a hole in the ground or a covering. Putting potatoes, or any root crop in a dug out or 'root cellar' under coverage was called 'putting them in hell' or 'helling them.'

Solomon wrote, *"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in sheol, whither thou goest."* *"For the dead know not anything."* **Ecclesiastes 9:10, 5**

Job describes the place he would have been, if he had already died, this way, *"For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest."* **Job 3:13**

Job says of this place of the dead, *"There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor."*

Job 3:17-18

The church of the Roman Pope and many Protestant churches tell us the wicked go where they never get rest, and where they hear devils screaming at them for all eternity. Godly Job never accused God Almighty of providing any such horrible place.

I spoke to the pastor of a large church here in Phoenix some years ago on this subject, and he didn't believe me when I told him the English translators of the King James Bible had used 'hell' and 'grave' interchangeably for the Hebrew word 'sheol'. He got out his Strong's Concordance, and looked it up. It proved I was right, but in fifteen years of preaching he had never learned that simple truth. Instead, he had always thought the grave was something different than hell.

I showed him: *"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them."*

Revelation 20:13

I pointed to the margin in his Bible, where it said that the word 'hell' could/should have been translated 'grave!' And it was right there in the New Testament.

Then I read: *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."* **Revelation 20:14**

I asked him, how could the lake of fire be hell, if hell is cast into the lake of fire? The man was almost speechless. In fifteen years of telling his congregation they would burn in fire in hell

for ever and ever unless they went through whatever rituals his church taught as salvation, he had never seen those two verses which made it rather plain that hell and the grave are the same thing.

I was speaking in Chicago several years ago, and in the question and answer period after I finished, a Protestant minister challenged me on my statement about hell. I answered, "Well I'm going to read a verse of Scripture, and then ask you a question. Then I'll answer your question, is that alright?" He agreed. I read this verse, but didn't tell him what I was reading. *"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"* **Isaiah 33:14**

I asked the preacher, "Who do you think will dwell in that devouring, everlasting burning?" He replied, "Well, the sinners of course, the wicked, those who have not accepted Christ.

So I said, "Here is God's answer in the next verse," *"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hand from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil."* **Isaiah 33:15**

It goes on, in unmistakable language, that it is the believers, the upright, the righteous who will dwell with the devouring fire and everlasting burnings. I did not get any further, for the minister got up out of his chair, shouted at me that I was a false prophet and taught false doctrines, and walked out of the auditorium.

"Our God is a consuming fire."
Hebrews 12:29

Why do preachers insist people will be tortured, in pain, in fire, for ever and ever, when the Bible teaches no such thing?

I have a taped sermon called, "The Fire That Will Burn Babylon" (#7221). The following ref-

erence is to where John describes the destruction of Mystery Babylon the Great, *"And shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judges her."* **Revelation 18:8**

The 'fire,' or 'hell-fire' of the Bible is quite different from that which the churches teach.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

The story of the Rich man and Lazarus is a pretty standard source for the church doctrine that men are alive in both 'heaven' and 'hell'. It is a story told by Christ Himself, and many churchgoers are surprised when one points out to them that the word 'heaven' is not in that passage; no more than the word 'heaven' is in **1 Thessalonians 4**, the so-called 'rapture passage.' Here is the story of the rich man and Lazarus:

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from

hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.'

Then he said, 'I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

Abraham saith unto him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

And he said, 'Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.'

And he said unto him, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'"

Luke 19:31

Think on these questions:

1. What symbolism might there be in the rich man's clothing; purple and fine linen (especially as we are told in Revelation 19:8 that fine linen is the righteousness of the saints).
2. Why would the rich man be described by Jesus as wearing believers' clothes?
3. What about the gate where Lazarus lay?
4. Why describe him with sores?
5. Is there any significance to crumbs of the rich man's table?
6. What about the dogs? Why are the dogs in the story at all?

The modern clergy teach that means 'heaven.' But it doesn't say 'heaven,' and besides, most of them insist that no-one went to heaven until after Jesus' death and resurrection. And here, Jesus is telling this story before His death. According to their own doctrine, Abraham at that time would have been in a compartment of hell that they call 'paradise.'

When Lazarus died and went to Abraham, he would have gone to hell, not to heaven. And yet, these same ministers use this story to teach that both Lazarus and father Abraham were in heaven looking down into hell. Consistency is not one of the attributes of the modern clergy.

Anyway, going on with the story, the rich man went to hell, looked up and saw father Abraham, and asked Abraham to send Lazarus to him with the tip of his finger dipped in water to cool the rich man's tongue. If the rich man were really in a fiery hell as described by the churches, you would think he at least would ask for a bucket of water, or perhaps a whole ocean.

* Why only a fingertip?

* What is the 'great gulf fixed'?

* Can living people in heaven actually see living people in a burning hell?

What a mockery that would make of heaven. How would you like to go to a heaven where part of your daily excitement would be looking down on your father, or your brother, or your daughter, or your niece burning in fire? Dare we accuse a merciful God Almighty of creating such a place for us, to spend eternity?

Think on these things, my friends, before you accept such explanations as Bible doctrines! As you read the rest of the story, we find the rich man has five brethren. Why? I ask you, if all Jesus was doing was telling a little story about three men, two in heaven and one in hell, why did he put in all the superfluous and foolish information, which the ministers never explain? In the booklet, "The Rich Man And Lazarus," I identify the rich man, and the dogs, and the gate, and the table, and the robes, and the five brethren, and the great gulf, and the reason the five brothers would not hear one who rose from the dead, as Abraham told the rich man. The real story of the rich man and Lazarus is so completely different from what is taught in the churches today, that you will be amazed why you never

suspected before that you were being lied to.

In the two taped sermons titled, “Paul’s Writings on Death and After” (#7309), I cover such phrases as Paul’s in **2 Corinthians 5**, where he was “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” and similar ones, and explain them from the Scripture. There are scores of passages in the New Testament that parallel the Old, as to the dead being asleep in the grave. Such easy ones to find as Peter’s sermon at Pentecost in **Acts 2**, where he says, *“David is still in his grave.”*

Most denominations today teach that all of the saints, who died before Christ, were taken to heaven by Christ after His resurrection. But in **Acts 2**, Peter is preaching his sermon fifty days after Christ’s resurrection, and ten days after Jesus was removed from their sight by a cloud. Peter says that David is both dead and buried, and that David is not ascended into the heavens. My Christian friends, Peter spoke the truth! David is not in heaven. Neither is any other saint of the Most High God. Those who are not now alive, are in the sleep of death. They will remain so until resurrection day. That truth is verified in a hundred passages in God’s Holy Word.

If Christians knew the truth that the dead are asleep, and are not in heaven, they would not have been so easily deceived by this strange doctrine that all Christians will fly off to heaven in an instant ‘rapture.’ (Nor would they be deceived by those who purport to ‘contact the dead’, disembodied spirits, etc.).

Since the erroneous interpretation of Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus is at the root of their doctrine, that people are alive in heaven or in a torturing hell, I think you should read my booklet, “The Rich Man And Lazarus”. If you really want to know the truth of that strange story with the beggar, the gate, the dogs, etc., this booklet will tell you. I assure you, that many of you, especially from fundamentalist churches, will be quite surprised at all the prophetic symbolism in that story. Symbolism you never saw

before, because you’ve been told that it was a simple story about heaven and hell. Remember, the orthodox teaching on this story is a contradiction of their own doctrine.

They first teach that no-one ascended to heaven until after Jesus’ resurrection. Then those same ministers insist this story of the rich man and Lazarus is a real story about something that had already taken place; a story told by Jesus before His resurrection. Their interpretation contradicts their own doctrine about the dead. Yet few people realize it.

When you hear the truth of this story, you will see there are no contradictions in it. It all fits beautifully. You will see that the rich man with his purple and fine linen is a prophetic figure, not an actual man. Just as Lazarus, or the beggar in the story, can be identified prophetically.

Lazarus is a symbolic figure standing for the whole house of Israel. Abraham’s bosom is, of course, the Kingdom of heaven on earth; the city that Abraham looked forward to, whose Builder and Maker was God. The rich man stands for a people who have Moses and the prophets, but who will NEVER make it into Christ’s Kingdom.

You should know what Jesus taught, and cast off the corruptions taught by men who hide Bible truths from you by falsely interpreting Jesus’ own words.

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