

The Day After You Die

The Hush of Heaven – Part VII

Job 11-14

Introduction

Christianity Today recently carried excerpts of interviews with very old people. I must admit that my definition of “old” is changing all the time!

One woman was asked to give some of the benefits of living to the age of 102. After thinking for a moment, she smiled and said, “Well, for one, there’s no more peer pressure.”

Another woman interviewed was Jeanne Calment, who was verified as being the oldest living human being at the time at 120 years of age. She still had plenty of spunk, too. When asked to describe her vision for the future, she answered, “Very brief.”

I really like the determination of another lady who was interviewed. She had never married and told her pastor, John Fetterman, to make sure there were no pallbearers at her funeral. He asked, “Why would you request that?”

She responded, “They wouldn’t take me out while I was alive; I’m not going to let them take me out when I’m dead.”

Frankly, for most people, the talk of dying is not a laughing matter, is it?

A growing number of people, in fact, are convinced that they will be able to cheat death.

A recent article entitled “Only in America,” published in February of 2006, ran the news that at least twelve American multimillionaires are now planning to come back to life better than ever. They are so confident in the progress of science and modern medicine that they have arranged for their bodies to be frozen at a cryogenic suspension plant.

They have even set up “personal revival trusts” which are designed to not only ensure but expand their wealth so that it will be waiting for them at the bank when they have been medically resurrected in about 100 to 200 years.

David Pizer, a 64-year-old millionaire, was interviewed a few months ago. He said that the ten million dollars he left to himself – after all the compound interest had been added over the years – would make him the richest man in the world when he woke up.¹

I really do not blame this unbeliever. There is something in the heart of man that believes this life is not the end.

Randy Alcorn writes in his book, entitled *Heaven*, about the inborn, intuitive sense to which human beings typically admit that they will live somewhere forever. Australian aborigines pictured heaven as a distant island beyond the western horizon. The ancient Mexicans, Peruvians, and Polynesians believed they would go to the sun or the moon after death. Native Americans believed that in the afterlife, their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo. The ancient Babylonian legend called the Gilgamesh Epic, refers to a resting place of heroes and even hints of a tree of life. The Romans believed that the righteous would picnic in the beautiful meadows of Elysia, while their horses grazed nearby.

It is true, as God’s word says in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that,

. . . [God] has . . . set eternity in [our] hearts . . .

Throughout history, one of the unifying themes of the human heart is the innate curiosity over life after death.

The question is not so much, “*Will* we live forever,” as, “*Where* will we live forever?”

Let me ask it this way, “What’s going to happen to you the day after you die?”

About the time your family is preparing your funeral, what will you be experiencing?

These are the very same questions posed in the oldest book in the Biblical record. Job asked the same questions about life after death. He was driven to these questions because of one very obvious dilemma – he thought his life would soon end.

Job’s Third Counselor – Zophar

We have been discovering that Job’s friends were making his last days miserable. Turn to chapter 11 in the book of Job, where the last of Job’s three counselors rises to speak. I want to quickly work through their discussion before diving more deeply into Job’s questions about life after death.

Zophar is assumed to be the youngest of Job’s friends because he speaks last.

Notice Job 11:1-2.

Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,

Shall a multitude of words go unanswered, and a talkative man be acquitted?

Note Job 11:5.

But would that God might speak, and open His lips against you,

Zophar obviously lacks the courtesy of Eliphaz which prompted him to apologize before speaking. He does not have the cowardice of Bildad who hides behind his traditions.ⁱⁱ

Not Zophar – it is an all out frontal attack with him. There are no punches pulled by Zophar the zealot. He is convinced, as are the other men, that Job is suffering because he has sinned against God.

It is interesting that we are all a little more like Zophar than we would like to admit, is it not?

Job was one of the wisest, godliest men in the east, according to God’s own words to Satan in that heavenly encounter in Job 1. God was the one who said, “Job is blameless . . . a righteous man and he hates sin.”

We are like Zophar and Eliphaz and Bildad – no matter how wise and good a person may have been in the past, when misfortune strikes we tend to wonder if it was due to some reason such as some hidden sin; some mistake on their part.

- A child runs away and we assume that the parents must have been a little less committed in the home, behind the scenes, than they appeared in public.
- A man has a heart attack and people assume he was working too hard and maybe even took time away from his family.
- A neighbor goes bankrupt and people assume he had it coming.ⁱⁱⁱ

We naturally assume some kind of error or failure or even sin as the answer for whatever suffering there is in someone’s life.

Zophar does not beat around the bush for one moment. He even suggests, in Job 11:6, that God has not punished Job for all his sins. He says,

. . . Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity.

In other words, “Job, you’re actually getting off light.”

Then Zophar reminds Job that he is no match for God. Job 11:7-11 deliver this condescending speech about the fact that God is “higher, deeper, longer, and broader” than anything we can imagine. Note that he reminds Job in verse 11,

For God knows false men, and He sees iniquity without investigating.

In other words, “Job, God knows you’re a hypocrite – He knows!”

Then Zophar delivers a very unkind insult to Job. Notice Job 11:12.

An idiot will become intelligent when the foal of a wild donkey is born a man.

The Hebrew word translated “idiot” refers to someone who is morally hollow; empty – a man of no reason or sense. In our colloquialism, we would call him a block-head or an air-head. It could be expanded to give the full brutality of this insult by amplifying the translation to read, “Job, an empty air-head idiot like you will no more get understanding than a wild donkey will give birth to a human being.”^{iv}

Stop at this point for a moment and let this scene sink in. Try to imagine yourself in Job’s place, sitting on the ash heap at the town dump. You have lost

nearly everything. You have not been able to sleep or eat for days. Your skin is itching uncontrollably and you are running a high fever. You are devastated and nearly delirious over the loss of your children; your family. Your financial support is gone and now your closest friends have turned against you.

Warren Wiersbe writes insightfully, “How sad it is when people who should share ministry end up creating misery.”^v

Zophar says, in Job 11:13-14, “Repent, Job, come clean and confess your sin. If you will, you’ll get your life back.”

“If you don’t,” he ends by warning Job in Job 11:20,

. . . the eyes of the wicked will fail, and there will be no escape for them; and their hope is to breathe their last.

With these final words, Zophar just sucks the life out of Job’s soul. He condemns him to die without hope of escape unless Job follows his advice and repents of his secret sins.

This has to be the lowest point in Job’s life.

All three friends have now spoken. One by one they took Job further and further away from hope.

Job’s Response

Job responds to all three of his counselors with his own bitter words in chapter 12 of Job. Look at Job 12:2.

Truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die!

In other words, “You men evidently have all the wisdom in the world and when you die, there won’t be any left on the planet.”

Then Job fights back. Notice Job 11:3.

But I have intelligence as well as you . . .

In other words, “I’m not an empty headed idiot.”

Job continues, “I know I’m a joke now to you. You’re laughing up your sleeve at my attempt to stand for the integrity of my character.”

Note Job 11:4.

I am a joke to my friends, the one who called on God and He answered him; the just and blameless man is a joke.

“Go ahead and smirk,” Job says, “go ahead and call me names – I am not inferior to you.”

He repeats this again in Job 13:2.

What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you.

Job says in effect, “I know as much about God as you do!”

He then launches into his own description of God’s character and power in Job 12:13-22.

With Him are wisdom and might; to Him belong counsel and understanding.

Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt; He imprisons a man, and there can be no release.

Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; and He sends them out, and they inundate the earth.

With Him are strength and sound wisdom, the misled and the misleader belong to Him.

He makes counselors walk barefoot and makes fools of judges.

He loosens the bond of kings and binds their loins with a girdle.

He makes priests walk barefoot and overthrows the secure ones.

He deprives the trusted ones of speech and takes away the discernment of the elders.

He pours contempt on nobles and loosens the belt of the strong.

He reveals mysteries from the darkness and brings the deep darkness into light.

Job says, “I know all this!”

In Job 13:1, he says,

. . . my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it.

This is not new stuff.

Job calls them all, in Job 13:4,

. . . worthless physicians.

In other words, “You are using treatment that does not help. You are prescribing medicines for the soul that are only making things worse. But no matter how bad it gets; no matter what God does to me – in fact, if God were to actually put me to death – I would still claim Him as my God and I would still hope in Him.”

Wow!

This is the amazing declaration of Job 13:15.

Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. . . .

This is the verse many people recall when they think of the perseverance of Job.

At this point, having studied the first 12 chapters with you, I am now in even more amazement and wonder at his response.

Yes, Job has passed the test! He cries out, “Even though God puts me to death, I will ultimately hope in Him.”

At his lowest moment, Job refuses to curse God.

We can also pass the test! If he can, we can!

- There is such a thing as unconditional trust in God;
- There can be obedience without any guarantees;
- There can be faith without healing or prosperity;
- It is possible, although not easy, to trust in the midst of the most difficult trial.

Job’s Questions – Life After Death

Understand that even though Job passes this test, he is still overwhelmed with the belief that his life will soon end. Even though Job will later declare his faith in his living Redeemer, at this point, in Job chapter 14, in his pain, Job is deeply unsettled and from his lips come penetrating questions. He frankly, does not know if God is indeed going to slay him.

Job, in fact, asks God, in Job 14:13, to,

. . . hide me in Sheol, . . . until Your wrath returns to You . . .

In other words, until God’s anger against him subsides.

Job wonders, “If God were to put me in Sheol; if I were to die, what happens next?”

In this chapter, Job will ask two penetrating questions that mankind has been asking ever since. They are questions of life after death.

When someone dies, where do they go?

Notice Job’s question in Job 14:10.

But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he?

Job wants to know where he will be the day after he dies. He is not concerned about the transition – he wants to know about the destination.

To the Old Testament saint, death was murky and the grave was troubling and unsettling. Job did not have the record of scripture that we have today. He

could not pull up his Bible software and do a word search on death and the afterlife. He could not even pull out his Strong’s Concordance to cross reference anything, much less open a commentary that offered insight or crack open a lexicon to do a word study.

We not only have a completed record of scripture today, we have volume after volume of detailed explanations regarding the record of scripture.

In Job’s day, there were more questions than answers. So Job asks with total sincerity in Job 14:10, “When someone dies, where do they go?”^{vi}

Where are people, the day after they die?

Job himself mentions a place called “Sheol” in Job 14:13. Perhaps Job’s question has less to do with destination than it does with the details about that destination. What is Sheol? What is Sheol like?

This Hebrew word, “Sheol” appears nearly seventy times in the Old Testament. Much of the confusion about this word comes from the fact that at times, it is translated “hell,” and other times “the grave”.

Sheol is not hell, and though the word can refer to the grave, it is not the grave either.

Sheol was the place where the departed spirits went of those who died.

The prophet wrote,

Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; it arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; it raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. (Isaiah 14:9)

We need to understand a couple of things about Sheol.

1. First, Sheol and the grave are two separate places.

The grave is the place where the body is laid. Sheol is the place where the spirit of the deceased is living – as alive as ever!

2. Secondly, Sheol is comprised of two different regions.

In the Old Testament, it is clearly taught that both the righteous and the unrighteous went to Sheol after dying.

David, in fact, had further revelation about death and the future life of those who died when he wrote,

The [foolish; that is, the unbeliever] are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd . . .

But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.

(Psalm 49:14-15)

In other words, David expected to go to Sheol when he died, but he did not expect to stay there forever.

Throughout the Old Testament, the term “Sheol” was a general term used for the region of departed spirits. B. B. Warfield, a scholar from the past generation, commented, “Israel from the beginning of its recorded history had the most settled conviction of the persistence of the soul in life after death; the body is laid in the grave and the soul departed for Sheol.”^{vii}

Before Jesus Christ appeared on the planet as the suffering Savior, the Old Testament had been translated into the Greek language. It was called the Septuagint, or the LXX (the 70) in reference to its supposed seventy translators. The Lord quoted from it, as did the apostles later on. Whenever the word “Sheol” appeared, it was translated with the Greek word, “Hades”. In fact, later, whenever the New Testament Greek text was quoting a Hebrew passage, the word “Sheol” was always translated, “Hades”.

Hades and Sheol are the same place. Again, Hades was not a reference to the grave, but to the place of the departed spirits.

The mystery of Sheol and Hades is cleared up in the preaching of Jesus Christ. He revealed an actual event in the lives of two deceased men whose spirits went to Hades. Luke’s gospel records the deaths of two men – a rich unbeliever and a poor believer.

Christ also confirms the two region view of Sheol and Hades.

The Lord said in Luke 16, beginning at verse 22,

Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

In Hades, he [the rich man] 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 so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.”

But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your life you received your 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, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.”

Now do not misunderstand – the rich man did not end up in Hades because he was rich, but because he had not followed after God – he had not demonstrated that relationship by the repentance of his sin. He will say as much himself a little later on. And Lazarus did not get into the comfort region – called Abraham’s bosom (or presence) – because he was poor, but because he had evidently trusted in the God of Abraham.

Now let me make some brief observations.

1. First, this passage clearly authenticates a two-region construction of Hades.

One region is a place of physical suffering and the other is a place of comfort – referred to as Paradise.

2. Secondly, this passage clearly teaches that Hades is a place of fully operative physical senses.

The unbelieving man cries out, “I just want a drop of water,”

. . . I am in agony in this flame. (Luke 16:24)

There is evidently some form of intermediate body given to those who have died, otherwise they would be ghost-like without any sensory perception – they would not need to eat or drink; they would not be affected by the flames of fire otherwise.

The fact that this is a place of physical, conscious experience and awareness cannot be missed.

3. Thirdly, this passage implies that those who are in Hades know they deserve whichever side they end up in.

One author brought out the fact that this man never complained of injustice. He never said, “I shouldn’t be here!” He complains about the pain, never injustice.^{viii}

4. Fourthly, Hades is a place of memory and emotion.

This man, in fact, will demonstrate great passion for the lost. He happens to have some brothers whom he knows are heading down the same path.

Look at Luke 16:27-30.

And he said, "Then I beg you, father, that you send [Lazarus] to my father's house –

"for I have five brothers – in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment."

But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them."

But he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!"

Can you believe – this man is suddenly concerned with missions?! This dead man has more passion than many living Christians.

Perhaps this is because he now knows for certain my fifth observation.

5. Fifthly, Hades is not a figment of anyone's imagination.

Every unbeliever who dies goes to Hades, and then after the final judgment, is consigned to the lake of fire forever. According to Revelation 20, Hades will empty its inhabitants before the great white throne judgment of God where they will be condemned and sent to the lake of fire that we know as hell.

For now, the souls of all those who die without faith in God through Christ go to Hades where they suffer torment and await their final judgment.

No wonder this man wanted his five brothers to escape. Hades was no longer an imagined place far away – it was real; it was a place. And he is still there.

Understand that this place of torment – Hades now and eventually hell forever – is not something the church came up with to try to make people nice to each another; to scare people into being good. In fact, it is not something that we could even conceive of on our own, apart from the record of divine inspiration.

Hell, like Hades, is a literal place. At this point, Hades is the holding place for those marked for judgment. Hell is the final, eternal place of judgment and torment.

Peter wrote that,

. . . the Lord . . . [is holding] the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. (II Peter 2:9 NIV)

Hell is not the ghetto. It is not the interstate during rush hour. It is not a bad relationship or a

tough assignment. Hell is not poverty or some disease. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no such thing as "hell on earth". No matter how bad it gets on earth, it will never compare to this literal, eternal place of torment.

Where will you be the day after you die?

The apostle Paul said of those who believe the gospel,

We are confident, . . . [that] to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord. (II Corinthians 5:8 NKJV)

We also are given some form of intermediate body so that we can enjoy the presence of Christ. We will have lips to speak and sing. We will have emotion and all the physical senses, like Lazarus of old.

Paul effectively said, "For the soul to be absent from the body is for the soul to be present with the Lord."

Paul told the Thessalonian believers that when believers who have died and are now with God come with Christ when he raptures the church, their bodies resurrected from the grave and reunited with their spirit, they will undress from their intermediate body and put on their permanent glorified body, along with all those who are alive when Christ comes for the church.

Now what happened to all those who, along with Lazarus, went to Hades – the comfort side or Paradise?

How is it that those who *now* die, go to heaven and not Hades?

John wrote in Revelation 20 that the inhabitants of Hades will be poured out into hell after the final judgment – so there cannot be any Old Testament or New Testament believers in there. What happened to them?

Paul writes that,

. . . when [Christ] ascended on high, He led captivity captive. (Ephesians 4:8 NKJV)

In other words, Christ led these believers out of Hades and into heaven, prepared by His word in an instant.

Paul goes further to say, in Ephesians 4:9-10,

Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might complete all things.

Colossians 2 hints at this historic event when Christ descended into Hades, not to suffer in some form of hell, but for a purpose – to deliver the news of his triumph over Satan and to make, Paul writes,

. . . a public display over them, . . . [through] His triumph. (Colossians 2:15)

Hades is no longer a holding place for believers – they are in heaven and everyone who dies in Christ will be in heaven as well.

When someone dies, will they live again?

Job asks the second penetrating question in Job 14:14,

If a man dies, will he live again? . . .

The answer is, “Yes . . . forever!”

Jesus Christ gave the answer to the question bound up in the heart of mankind when He said,

. . . I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, (John 11:25)

Those who place their faith in Christ will have this future – everlasting life in a new heaven and a new earth as their eternal home.

The real question is not, “*Will* we live forever?” The real question is, “*Where* will we live forever?”

There is life after death! Job knew it intuitively and so do we.

This is not philosophical speculation; this is not religious mythology; this is not some fabrication to make people feel better. It is the answer from God. This is the word from the Creator. And His word is totally reliable and entirely credible and eternally true. Period!^{ix}

Conclusion

Where will you be the day after you die?

You will be fully conscious; fully aware – you will be you, more alive than ever, clothed in a temporary body either suffering in Hades awaiting that eternal sentence of hell or enjoying the presence and joy and worship and service of Christ.

For those who believe the gospel – the day after you die, you will be experiencing an end to the struggles of life on earth that Job longed to escape and perhaps you do too. You will be free – for death will have handed you over to life.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/3/2007 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ “Only in America,” Feb. 3, 2006, PT.COM: The Week, p. 6.

ⁱⁱ David McKenna, Mastering the Old Testament: Job (Word Publishing, 1986), p. 99.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mike Mason, The Gospel According to Job (Crossway, 1994), p. 141.

^{iv} David J. A. Clines, Word Biblical Commentary: Job 1-20 (Word, 1989), p. 266.

^v Charles Swindoll, Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance (Word, 2004), p. 111.

^{vi} Ibid., p. 122.

^{vii} Erwin Lutzer, One Minute After You Die (Moody Press, 1997), p. 34.

^{viii} Ibid., p. 38.

^{ix} Sam Gordon, Hope and Glory: I & II Thessalonians, p. 161.