

HOPELESS CHRISTIANITY

Or “No Salvation without Resurrection”!

Preliminaries:

- The most common description of death is “sleep”: *koimao* “asleep”¹. This is described as a **deep sleep** from which people will one day be awakened (cp. **Dan. 12:2**).
- CONSIDER this: **ALL** the OT kings registered are said to have “died/been laid to rest with their fathers²”, that is, **fell asleep** [**Acts 13.36**; cp. Stephen, **Acts 7.60**].
- Reformed Judaism, like Christian Orthodoxy, adopted the immortal soul doctrine:

Page | 1

“We **reassert** the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding the belief on the divine nature of human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.” 1885 Pittsburgh Conference

“That classical Judaism firmly believed in the resurrection of the dead—indeed, insisted upon it as a **defining tenet of the community—today comes as a shock to most Jews and Christians alike**. . . Abba Hillel Silver [Reformed rabbi and one of the most important figures in American Judaism, in his influential volume *Where Judaism Differed*], presents **the resurrection of the dead as a late and degraded development** in Jewish thought, **a borrowing from foreign sources** ‘to which the Jews added nothing original’ . . . The Christians, vulnerable to **a crude superstition about a god-man who came back from the dead, have perverted the Hebrew Bible** by introducing something altogether foreign into it.”
J.D. Levenson³

1. **2Cor 5.8; Phil 1.23**: “*Out of the body to be with the lord*”
 - No-body means you’re a nobody!
 - Body + breath of life = “living soul/person” (**Gen. 2:7**). At the resurrection we will have spiritual bodies (**1Cor 15.44-55**).
 - **2Cor 5.8** death = “naked,” a fearful, *unthinkable* and practically incomprehensible state.

“For though absent in body, I am present in spirit (*pneuma*)’ (Colossians 2:5). Was his immortal spirit in one place, and his body was in another while he was alive? If so, then the immortal spirit can leave the body when it wants to, and the body can live without the spirit, but James tells us that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). Was Paul’s body dead for a time while his spirit was gone to be at Colossae? No, he was saying he was with them in his thoughts and heart, not that an immortal spirit had left his body, went to Colossae, and returned.” W.R. West⁴

“Jesus said, ‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also’ (John 14:3). Many say, ‘Not so Lord, we will be with you in Heaven as soon as we die, Your second coming and the resurrection will not be needed for we will already be alive and already with You in Heaven.’ But Paul said, ‘For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory’ (Philippians 3:20-21). It is us (our bodies) who will be transformed, not something that is in us that is now just as immortal as it could ever be, something that will not need to be transformed, and it is this something that is already immortal that is now in a person

¹ Mat 9.24; 27.52; Mar 5.39; Lu 8.52; Jn 11.11-13; Acts 7.60; 13.36; 1Cor 11.30; 15.6, 18, 20; 1Thess 4.13-15; 5.6, 10; 2Pe 3.4.

² 1 K 11.21; 14.20; 15.8; 16.6; 22.40; 2K 8.24; 10.35; 13.9; 14.16; 13.7; 16.20; 20.21; 21.18; 24.6; cp. 2Chro 9.31; 12.16; 14.1; 16.13.

³ *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, pp 1-3.

⁴ *Resurrection or Immortality*, pp 101-102.

that will not wait for the Lord Jesus to come again, but it will immediately go to Heaven to be with Him at death. Both those in Christ who are dead, and those who are living, will together go from the earth to meet the Lord in the air when He is coming from Heaven before we will 'be with the Lord.' 'Then we that are alive, that are left, SHALL TOGETHER with them be caught up (from the earth) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). How could Paul have said any clearer that those who are now asleep are not now alive in Heaven, but that they will be raised from the dead and meet the Lord in the air as He is returning?"⁵

"It is little less than a crime for anyone to pick out certain words and frame them into a sentence, not only disregarding the scope and context, but ignoring the other words in the verse, and quote the words 'absent from the body, present with the Lord' with the view of dispensing with the hope of the Resurrection (which is the subject of the whole passage) as though it were unnecessary; and as though 'present with the Lord' is obtainable without it."

Summary: The teaching of some makes Paul be wrong when he said we are "longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven" for their teaching says we had it at birth and will always have it even if we go to "Hell".⁶

2. **Luke 16:19-31: *The Rich Man and Lazarus*:**

- To read this literally would be ridiculous. It doesn't even work for the "no-body soul" doctrine.
- Assumes that Judgment, the Last Day, has come and gone.
- Jesus uses Jewish/Pharisaic "afterlife/parable" stories to make ethical points about the rich and the poor.

"[Miriam] said to him: 'By the life of your head, Caesar, let the sword come upon my neck and upon his neck together.' He said to her: 'Heaven forbid! I shall not do such a thing, as it is written in your Torah: *You shall not slaughter it with its young on the same day* (Lev. 22:28).' The child said to him: 'Wicked one, have you perhaps fulfilled the whole Torah except this verse alone?' Immediately they snatched him away from her in order to kill him.

His mother said to him: 'My son, may your heart not faint, and may you not despair. You are going to your brothers, and you will be seated in the bosom of our father Abraham. And tell him in my name: You built one altar and did not sacrifice your son, but I built 7 altars and sacrifice my sons on them. And for that matter, yours was (merely) a trial, but mine was a fact.'" van Henten, Avemarie⁷

"Naked came he into the world, and naked he leaves it; would that the departure were as innocent as the arrival! ... This day he sits in the bosom of Abraham, said Rabbi; i.e., he died." P.I. Hershon⁸

"Those who make this parable into a literal story do not accept the main part of it as being literal. They do not accept Abraham's bosom as being a literal place, but as a symbolic place; his literal bosom had turned to dust many years before, and there would not be room for even one person in Abraham's literal bosom; therefore, if part of it cannot be literal none of it can be literal, if it is a true story then all of it must be literal. It is a symbolic picture or a true story? It cannot be a mixture of the two; it cannot be part literal and part a true story. Does anyone believe Lazarus was literally carried to Abraham's literal bosom by angels?"

Many want to make this a true story and not a parable to use it to prove Hell, but the only part they want to be a true story is the one word 'torment' even though it is clear that the 'torment' in this parable is not

⁵ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

⁶ *The Companion Bible*, Bullinger.

⁷ *Martyrdom and Noble Death*, 'The Story of Miriam and her Seven Martyred Sons', *Lamentations Rabbah*, pp 146-150.

⁸ *The Pentateuch according to the Talmud. Genesis*.

torment in Hell; the rich man was not being tormented in Hell and Lazarus was not in Heaven.” W.R. West⁹

“We want to know if this was a real experience, and if it teaches the condition of the dead. Let it be remembered, then, according to the philosophy that they are ‘spirits.’ Will you tell me how you reason that a ‘spirit’s tongue’ can be cooled with water? ‘Oh,’ you say, ‘that represents’—hold on, no representations can be in a real circumstance. If you say it is real, stay with it. This policy of making it half literal and half figurative, just because there is an end to gain, is a nature ‘fakir’ in theology. It, therefore, represents nothing if it is a real circumstance, as you affirm. How could Lazarus carry a drop of water on his ‘spiritual’ finger? You say, ‘Oh, that doesn’t mean literal water.’ Well sir, it does or you do not mean what you say, I care not who you are. But reason with me. How could a spiritual tongue be cooled with a drop of water? ‘Oh,’ you say, ‘That must not be pressed too literal,’ no, not too literal, but just a literal as in any real circumstance. If it was a literal fact, then the details, which make it up are literal fact also. And to deny that it to deny your position.” E.D. Slough¹⁰

3. **Luke 23.43:** Today in *paradise*

- Placement of the comma dictates the doctrine: “I tell you the truth **today**, you will be with me in paradise.” (cp. **Acts 20.26**)
- “Heaven is nowhere the destination of the dying” (J.A.T. Robinson). Comfort in the face of death is always related to the resurrection (cf. **John 11:21–26**).
- “Paradise” is not heaven but the future, restored Eden/Kingdom: Rev 2.7; cp. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35.
- Jesus promised to be in heaven with the thief on that very day. NOT SO: 3 days in the grave, on earth after resurrection.

“...we have been able to determine at least 3 truths regarding the words spoken here. First, we recognize that Jesus was speaking these words in order to encourage the thief [promising] on that day that when he established his kingdom the thief would be a part [of it]....Secondly, the promise Jesus gave the thief was not realized on that day based on our discovery that Jesus did not go to paradise on the day of his death. Instead, Jesus entered the place of the dead, the grave (*Sheol* or Hades)... [The thief] too went into the grave and is awaiting the resurrection [1Cor 15.22]... Finally, the promise Jesus gave the thief is a promise for you and me today.” Dr. Warren II¹¹

4. **Rev. 6.9-11; cp. Rev 20.4-5:** *Murdered People Crying out*

- Figure of speech¹² known as *personification*: headless people/**souls** crying out: Cp. Abel’s **blood** crying out: **Gen 4:8-10**. Also the word translated “souls” [*psychas*] can also mean “life” [*psyche*]. NOTE: LXX **Lev. 17.11**, “**life** [*psyche*] of the body is in its **blood**”; cp. **Gen 4.10**. In other words, “Their **life**/person is crying out for **blood**/vengeance.”
- **Rev 20** shows that these people “lived *again*,” meaning they were dead!

“The word psyche [soul] has no such fixed meaning as is put upon it by theology and tradition. [It] is often put for person. When we say that the population consists of so many souls, we do not mean ‘soul’ as distinct from body, but we mean so many persons ... So there is no reason whatever for adhering to the traditional meaning rendering, ‘soul,’ in this passage as denoting a part of a man. The words simply mean ‘I saw those who had been slain [killed].’ John also hears what they say. Speaking requires the organs of

⁹ *Resurrection or Immortality*, pp 716.

¹⁰ *Eternal Torment or the Second Death*, the indictment of eternal torment. The self-negation of a monstrous doctrine, tried, judged and condemned out of its own mouth by the arguments and admissions of its staunchest advocated, 1914.

¹¹ *Dead Men Talking*, pp 42-46.

¹² “A figure by which things are represented or spoken of as persons; or, by which we attribute intelligence, by words or actions, to inanimate objects or abstract ideas.” Bullinger, *Figures of Speech In The Bible*, p. 861.

HOPELESS CHRISTIANITY

speech... These were the martyred saints personified and represented as waiting. They themselves were dead; for in Rev. 20.4, John sees them again, and it says 'they lived again' in the first resurrection. 'The rest of the dead lived not again until 1000 years ended' (Rev 20.5). Why say 'lived not again' if, all the time, they were alive in some other place?" Bullinger¹³

TEST ALL THINGS!!



“The **assumption** that John dispenses with the future resurrection would mean that *he has significantly altered the view* of ‘resurrection’ found elsewhere in the documents of the NT or in the Judaism of the period... The dead are raised, not ‘spiritually’ or metaphorically, but bodily. It is of course possible that John has done just that: **radically reinterpreted** the meaning of “the resurrection”, but the data of the Gospel do not bear out the **assumption** that John has **collapsed the future resurrection into a present quality of life**... Language of being raised up **remains resolutely attached to the future, to the ‘last day’**. **Resurrection overcomes death**... It is *that* life, construed as **fellowship and union** with God, that is *present* for those who believe... The implication is clearly that the “life” one has in the present is as **much promise as possession**. The full possession of life *awaits* the promise of the resurrection... [Bringing to] fruition what the Father offers through the Son, the gift of life [in the age to come].” M.M. Thompson¹⁴

Reference/Recommended Readings:

- E.W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation; Figures of Speech Used in the Bible; The Companion Bible*.
- T.S. Warren II, *Dead Men Talking*.
- W.R. West, *Resurrection or Immortality*, online: <http://www.robertwr.com/resurrection.pdf>
- M.M. Thomson, *The God of the Gospel of John*.
- J.D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*.

¹³ *Commentary on Revelation: Or, the Apocalypse*, pp 263-265.

¹⁴ *The God of the Gospel of John*, p. 82-83, 2001.