

JOB'S TESTIMONY TO RESURRECTION TRUTH

By

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Of all the great questions confronting mankind, none is more sobering or more demanding of an answer than the one put forth by Job: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Science, medicine and psychology have no answer. When men look to religion, including the churches, they find contradiction and confusion. In fact, at most funerals, where the answer would be most appropriate, one may usually hear that death itself is unreal, that the one being buried is still alive in heaven and, therefore, Job's questions becomes irrelevant.

Job not only answer his own question but gives a theology of resurrection that perfectly coincides with the teaching which Jesus and the apostles were to give many centuries later. This brief article and study is based on Job, chapter 14, verses 10 through 15.

Vs. 10. "But man dies, and is laid low: yes, man gives up the spirit, and where is he?"

The expression "laid low", is better translated "weakens" or "fades away", as God said to Adam, "unto dust shall you return" (Gen. 3:19). "Gives up the spirit" is that same as "expires" or "breathes his last", even as it was said of the death of Jesus, the He "gave up his spirit" (Greek word is "pneuma, usually translated as breath or spirit (John 19:30, Mt. 27:50, Mark 16:37, Luke 23:46). This "breath" is the "breath of life" God breathed into the nostrils of Adam at his creation (Gen. 2:7).

Vs. 12. "So man lies down and rises not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be roused out of their sleep."

Job looked upon the state of death as sleep, just as it was later described by Jesus, Luke and Paul. He would continue in such a state as long as the natural universe exists—"Till the heavens be no more."

Jesus repeatedly stated that He would raise up the redeemed (and unredeemed) "in the last day" (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54, 5:28–29). "Till the heaven be no more" places the timing of the awakening at the Day of Judgment, as explained by Peter: "But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up...But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness" (II Peter 3:7, 10, 13).

Job was not expecting to die and "go to his reward" nor even to judgment. All this was to wait for a future time — the "last day."

Vs. 13a. "Oh, that you would hide me in Sheol, that would keep me secret, until thy wrath be past."

Sheol (“hades” in the New Testament) is the state of death. Both the righteous and unrighteous enter sheol/hades at death. Jesus entered hades until the resurrection (Act 2:27). At the time of judgment “death and hades (give) up the dead that (are) in them: and they (are) judged...” (Rev. 20:11,3). Note, also, the timing of Rev. 11:18: “And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.” There is a time for judgment and reward, but it is not at death. It occurs at the final judgment. John writes, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, said the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them” (Rev. 14:13). Job was content that God should hide him in sheol where he might rest until the time of judgment.

Vs. 13b. “That thou would appoint me a set time, and remember me.”

Job seemed to be aware that God, in His sovereignty, has appointed certain times for certain things (Acts 17:26, Dan. 8:19, Acts 1:7). “Inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). Peter said of King David that “his tomb is with us unto this day” and that he “ascended not into the heavens” (Acts 2:29, 34). In what is called “the roll call of the faithful” in Hebrews, chapter eleven, many of God’s faithful servants are named, after which it is written, “And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39–40). This coincides with I Thess. 4:15–16, where Paul assures the saints that their loved ones who have “fallen asleep” will be remembered and resurrected at Christ’s coming.

All who die remain in the state of death until the appointed time, and each will be remembered, as Job prayed. This is what the thief on the cross asked: “Jesus, remember me when thou come in thy kingdom,” and Jesus promised to do so (Luke 23:42). While He remembers all our works, whether good or evil, He also will remember those who have confessed Him before men, that He may confess to the Father that we are His people, redeemed by His death.

Vs. 14. “If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, till my release (or change) comes.”

Job suggested nothing similar to the idea so common today, that upon dying one immediately begins to enjoy the bliss of heaven (see also Rom. 8:23, I Thess. 1:10). Rather, he explained: “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 this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:51, 53). When Jesus appears, he “shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory” (Phil. 3:21).

Vs. 15a. “Thou would call, and I would answer thee.”

Just as Jesus was able to call Lazarus from the grave, He will come at the appointed time to call all the dead from their resting places. “For the hour comes, in

which all that are in the tombs 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 judgment” (John 5:28–29). This is the hope Paul gave to the Thessalonians, concerning their dead, that the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout and they shall arise (I Thess. 4:16). Job understood this in ancient times. It seems strange that the church should continually talk of “going to heaven” at death, when it is expressly taught in scripture that we will first see Him when He calls men forth from death at His coming again. After explaining this to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thess. 4:18). To offer comfort to the bereaved by saying their loved ones are already enjoying life in heaven is a rejection of Paul’s instructions here.

Vs. 15b. “Thou would have a desire to the work of thy hands.”

Man was created to reflect the very image of God. Although that image has been marred by man’s sinful rebellion, the sin can be removed through the atoning death of Jesus, and the redeemed can “put on the new man, that after God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Eph. 4:24). God’s purpose will not be thwarted, and, according to Job. His desire for the work of His hands will not go unsatisfied.

Job had suffered tragic losses — his children, his wealth and even his health — but he had hope in the great day of resurrection and the ultimate goal, that he should be perfected in God’s image.

Yes, man will live again. The biblical promise is not that man doesn’t die or that he lives on in another realm but that God will bring him back to life through resurrection. The unsaved must face judgment and destruction, but the redeemed are to be given perfect life and immortality in God’s new creation.

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