

PULPIT SERMONS

DEFENDERS OF THE WORD

"ESCHATOLOGY???" (The History of the Dead)"

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(TEXT: Job 14:14, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.")

It is our purpose in this message to give to one and all who study the Word of God a true Revelation (with the help of the Holy Ghost) on **ESCHATOLOGY**, which means the "History of the Dead". Many teachers, pastors and evangelists of our day have very little knowledge of this great message and therefore we have not had the true meaning of "The Sign of the Prophet Jonah."

The fear of death appears to have possessed all men before the resurrection of our Lord. But through His resurrection, He brought hope and peace to all who believe on Him. This appears to be taught by the writer of Hebrews, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who thought fear of death were all their lifetime subject of bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15). From this scripture, we conclude that multitudes of godly saints (still being held captive by Satan, for the Blood Atonement had not yet been given) went down into death with fear before Christ's resurrection. The fear of dying and being consigned to darkened home of the dead was of great concern to Job. Even though he saw the day of release from that abode, the fear and dread of the place filled him with awe. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27). His fear of death and of going to the abode of the dead to await the day when he would see the Redeemer is found in the following words: "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (Job 10:20-22). I believe that after Job's communion with God the fear of death left him.

Since the resurrection of Christ, the fear of death has been removed from all who know Him as their Saviour, and of course, believe the Word of God. They know like Paul, that it is far better to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.



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The "SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH"

The "Sign of the Prophet Jonah" points humanity to "the heart of the earth" and answers the age-long questions, "Where are the Dead?" And, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The fact that Christ used the "Sign of the Prophet Jonah" to illustrate His own Death, Burial, and Resurrection, authenticates the teaching of the Bible on the subject of "The History of the Dead: PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE". Jonah actually cried from "The Belly of Hell".

On a momentous occasion, the Lord Jesus Christ said to His enemies: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was **THREE DAYS** and **THREE NIGHTS** in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be **THREE DAYS** and **THREE NIGHTS** IN THE HEART of the EARTH" (Matt. 12:39-40).

In anticipation of His Bodily Resurrection from the dead, and in recognition of the Jewish custom of not accepting the fact of death until after three full days and three full nights of non-bodily animation, Jesus used the accepted historical fact of Jonah and then pointed forward to His own experience "in the heart of the earth." His bitterest enemies did not question the history of Jonah. Therefore Jesus used Jonah as a "SIGN" of His Death, Burial, and Resurrection.

The book of Jonah has been assailed by atheists and infidels more than any other book of the Bible. It has been the laughing-stock of the infidel and the victim of the higher critic. It has been assailed, ridiculed and wrested from its simple, straight-forward record of facts, and pronounced a fiction, a myth, an allegory, a parable and a vision. "Destroy the authenticity of Jonah and the whale," the modernists tell us, and you destroy the fact of Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ believed the story of Jonah and the Whale, because He confirmed it twice. Once when He said, in Matthew 12:40; "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Again when He said, in Luke 11:32; "The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." The story of Jonah and the whale is historically and Scripturally TRUE. Like Elijah the Tishbite,

Ames of Tekoa and John the Baptist, Jonah is abruptly introduced into the pages of revelation. God gathers out of the lives of His servants that which He purposes, and is precious in His sight, and records it in His Book; over all the rest He draws His pen.

The story of Jonah and the whale is authentic or Jesus Christ Himself was the greatest deceiver the world has ever seen; God, forbid, anyone from thinking that our Jesus, the Saviour of the world, as ever being a deceiver. If the story of Jonah, is a myth, or a mere tale with a moral, then the Lord Jesus Christ is exposed as an impostor, or He becomes a party to a wilful misrepresentation. But where is the human being that will dare to call Christ a liar, who without sin, the immaculate Man of Galilee? Who could think a lie possible of Him, who conquered the grave in **THREE DAYS . . . the world in THREE YEARS . . .** who tarried in these blessed forty days of assuring love, then swept by the gravitation of His own divinity to the right hand of God, from whence He shall return in the flaming wonders of a dissolving sky to meet them who look for Him the **SECOND TIME**.

The Great Fish

The Bible says: "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah . . ." The "thus saith the Lord" is sufficient proof for me. The Lord of all Creation is the perfect Master of all natural and supernatural laws. If there was no existing supernatural laws to produce the miracle of Jonah, **GOD COULD CREATE A SPECIAL LAW**. He is the Creator, who spoke the Universes into existence, then don't you think it would be a very small thing for the Creator to prepare a great fish to swallow a disobedient prophet?

Did Jonah Die in the Fish?

The one fact in connection with the supernatural experience of Jonah, as recorded in the Word of God, is commonly overlooked even by believing students of the Bible. It is this: Jonah was not only swallowed by a great fish, prepared and provided by the Lord for this purpose, and Jonah not only came out from the fish three days later, but Jonah **ACTUALLY DIED WHILE HIS BODY WAS IN THE FISH. IT WAS A DOUBLE MIRACLE**. Jonah was not only a type of the Resurrection of Christ but himself had a resurrection experience, dying and being brought back to life again. Back to this natural life, where he later had to die a natural death. And, since the scriptures tell of various individuals who were raised from the dead, there is no reason why the resurrection of Jonah should be regarded as impossible. Three resurrections (unto a natural life) are recorded in the Old Testament: (1) The widow's son, whom God raised from the dead through the faith of Elijah the prophet (1st Kings 17:17-24); (2) the Shuanite's son, whom God raised from the dead through the faith of Elisha the prophet (2nd Kings 4:8-37) and (3) the man whom God raised from the dead when his body touched the bones of Elisha the prophet (2nd Kings 13:20-21).

The keys to the record of Jonah are found in

two different prayers recorded in the second chapter. These prayers he offered at different times and from different places so far as his spirit was concerned. The first verse tells us: "Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly". The second verse in that prayer he said, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; **OUT OF THE BELLY OF HELL (SHEOL)** cried I, and thou heardest my voice."

It is evident that Jonah had died and prayed to God from Sheol, and God heard and answered him. Scriptures locates Sheol, or Hades, in "the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. 4:9). "SHEOL" is the Hebrew name used in the Old Testament to designate the place to which the spirits of the **WICKED** and **RIGHTEOUS** went at **DEATH**. "**Hades**" is the Greek name used in the New Testament to designate the same place to which the spirits of the **WICKED** and **RIGHTEOUS** went **BEFORE** the **DEATH** and **RESURRECTION** of the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**. Therefore, Sheol and Hades are one and the same place.

The Scriptures indicate that Sheol-Hades is located down below the surface of the earth. There are twenty Old Testament references declaring Sheol to be downward. Here are four of them: ". . . For I will go down into the grave unto my son . . ." (Genesis 37:35). ". . . so he that goeth down to the grave . . ." (Job 7:9). "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave . . ." (Isa. 14:11). "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down into hell . . ." (Psa. 55:15). Here are two New Testament references that declares Hades to be downward: ". . . shalt be brought down to hell . . ." (Luke 10:15). Ezekiel referred to Sheol as being in "the nether parts of the earth" (Ezek. 31:14-18). Isaiah had the same thing in mind when he said: ". . . ye lower parts of the earth . . ." (Isa. 44:23). The Lord Jesus Christ very definitely located Sheol-Hades as being "in the **HEART** of the **EARTH**" (Matt. 12:40).

Sheol-Hades before the resurrection of Christ was divided into two compartments, one over the other, and separated by "a great fixed gulf" (Luke 16:26). The upper compartment was called "Abraham's bosom" in (Luke 16:22), and "Paradise" in (Luke 23:43). The lower compartment was called "lowest (Sheol) hell", in (Deut. 32:22), and the "place of torment" in (Luke 16:28). In the hour and article of death all the bodies of the dead returned to the elements from which they came. The spirits of the **RIGHTEOUS**, alive, awake and fully conscious, went into "Paradise" of Sheol-Hades and were "comforted" while the spirits (souls) of the wicked, alive, awake and fully conscious, went into the "place of torment" and were "tormented" according to Luke 16:31.

Jonah said in his prayer: "I went down to the bottom of the mountains: the earth with her bars was about me forever." While Jonah's body remained in the belly of the great fish, his spirit went down into Sheol at "the bottom of the mountains" where the bars of the earth (not water) were about him. The expression "forever", of course, simply indicates what seemed to Jonah at the time to be his permanent place of abode, but the expression is immediately followed by the word

“yet”. For Jonah prayed: “Yet thou hast brought up my life from “corruption, O my Lord God”. The Hebrew here translated in the Authorized King James Version “corruption”, and in the Revised Version “the pit”, is the same word that David uses in Psalm 103:4, when he declares that God “redeemeth thy life from destruction”, or “the pit”. Corruption is the condition of death which Jonah experienced, and out of which God brought him back to life. In Jonah’s experience in the fish; he was in Sheol; he was in the earth with her bars about him, in “the lower parts of the earth,” and he was delivered by God from corruption or destruction, or the pit. We must either accept these statements of Jonah’s inspired words as literal statements of facts or take all three statements as figures of speech. A very sound principle that I have always followed of Bible interpretation is to take a Bible statement as literal unless the context plainly shows that it must be figurative—and certainly the context in Jonah 2, does not show this. Jonah really died and was raised from the dead, and thus became a perfect type of Christ’s Resurrection from the dead. Therefore, our Lord declared: “FOR AS JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE WHALE’S BELLY; SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH” (Matt. 12:40). A great event took place in Sheol-Hades at the death and resurrection of Jesus.

During the three days and three nights that the body of Christ was in the tomb He entered Sheol-Hades. This was in fulfillment of His own prophecy of “The Sign of the Prophet Jonah”. While the body of our Lord remained in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, He went down into the heart of the earth, to Sheol-Hades, and entered the upper part called “Paradise”. Hence, the words to the thief on the Cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise”. Peter says that while His body was in the tomb, “went and preached unto the spirits in prison”. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1st Peter 3:18-20). It would be wresting of this passage to attempt to make it say that it refers to the preaching of Noah to the Antediluvians. Peter says explicitly that it was Christ who did the preaching and that He suffered violent physical death by which He went and preached. In other words, it was His vicarious death that qualified Him to enter the region of imprisoned spirits. Could this be said of Noah? Moreover, Genesis says, “And all the days of Noah were nine hundred fifty years; and HE DIED,” a natural death. Whereas Peter says the Lord was “PUT TO DEATH”. Obviously, Peter’s difficult statement does not refer to the preaching of Noah but rather to the fact that there were spirits in prison who had left the body as far back as Noah’s time. Paul tells us what

Jesus did at the time of His visit to those regions, “He led captivity captive”. Who were these captives? They were the Old Testament saints who were waiting in “PARADISE,” the HEAVENLY part of Sheol-Hades. That Christ should lead them out of Sheol was predicted by the prophets. “I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house”. (Isa. 42:6-7). “That thou may sayest to the PRISONERS, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, SHEW YOURSELVES. They shall be fed in the ways, and their pastures shall be IN ALL HIGH PLACES” (Isa. 49:9). David said: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell . . .” (Psa. 16:10). The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isa. 61:1).

These Old Testament saints in Zechariah 9:12; are called “PRISONERS OF HOPE”. “For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself, likewise, took part of the same; that through DEATH He might destroy (frustrate) him that had power (authority) of death, that is, the DEVIL; And DELIVER them who through fear of death WERE ALL THEIR LIFETIME SUBJECT TO BONDAGE” (Heb. 2:14-15). “When a strong man (i.e. Satan) armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in place; but when a stronger than he (JESUS) shall come upon him, and overcome him, He taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and DIVIDETH HIS SPOILS” (Luke 11:21-22).

Paul says; “Wherefore he saith, when He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also ascended first into THE LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things” (Eph. 4:8-10).

In other words, Jesus lifted the PARADISE out of Sheol, tasted death for every regenerated mortal, SO NOW these that leave the body in Christ do not go to Sheol-Hades like the Old Testament characters. The spirits of the SAVED DEAD followed Christ as He ascended out of the place of comfort (Paradise). Now, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

There are a number of Scriptures that indicate that the resting place of the saved dead has been moved from the proximity of the unsaved dead into the presence of our Lord in Heaven. Paul in writing the Philippian letter said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, AND BE WITH CHRIST; WHICH IS FAR BETTER” (Phil. 1:21-23). Another text portion of

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the Word of God that indicates that the SAVED DEAD are NOW in the presence of the Lord is this: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so THEM also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thes. 4:14). It is very evident here that we could not come with Him unless we had previously gone to Him. In Paul's Corinthian letter, he discusses the blessedness of the saved dead. "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are ABSENT from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6-8). Therefore the saved dead, since the Resurrection of Christ, go to be with Him in Heaven, because SIN, the BARRIER, has been put away by His sacrifice, and therefore, they are free to enter Heaven in the train of our Lord. There is no going to the Old Testament Paradise, no waiting in Hades, for the saints who die today.

"LOWEST SHEOL" was disturbed when Christ delivered the captives from "UPPER SHEOL" or "PARADISE". The wicked spirits were left there where they STILL are, and where they will remain until the resurrection of the wicked dead at the Great White Throne Judgement. With the removal of the "Paradise" compartment, Sheol-Hades was automatically enlarged and thus provides additional room for the gathering of the wicked spirits till the END of the MILLENNIUM.

In conclusion: as the body of Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, while his soul was in Sheol, and his spirit in the hands of God for three days and three nights, so the body of Jesus was in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea while His Soul was in Paradise of Sheol-Hades and His spirit in the hands of His Father for three days and three nights. The Lord Jesus Christ removed Paradise, along with the spirit of Jonah and the spirits of other Old Testament Saints, to the THIRD HEAVEN. And now, in the article of death, the body of the Christian believer returns to DUST, his SOUL goes to be with the LORD in HEAVEN, while his SPIRIT goes back to God who gave it. At death the body of the UNBELIEVER returns to DUST, his SOUL goes down into HADES to await the resurrection of the WICKED DEAD at the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT after the MILLENNIUM, and his SPIRIT returns to the jurisdiction of God. Thus we have in "ESCHATOLOGY", the SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH". Certified Faith and an Authentic Christianity.