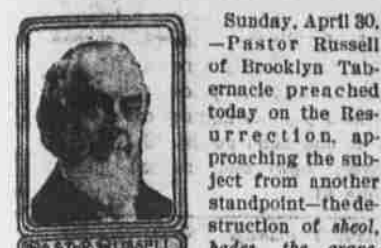


THE KEYS OF DEATH AND HADES

Shall to Be Destroyed, Then Will Come the Shout:

"O HADES WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"



He considered a number of texts voicing his theme. He said:

Death is spoken of throughout the Bible as an enemy. Merely hymn-book theology presents it as a friend, an angel sent of God. Death is introduced to our attention in the Bible as the penalty for sin, with the distinct understanding that had Adam not transgressed the Divine commands he need not have died, nor ever have been cast out of his Eden home. St. Paul emphasizes the fact that death is the penalty of sin and that the resurrection of the dead will come to mankind as the result of the redemptive work of Christ. He says, "Since by man comes death, by man also comes the resurrection of the dead. For as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive; but every man in his own order," band or cohort (I Corinthians xv. 21-23).

As Genesis introduces death as a penalty for sin, Revelation concludes the great drama by pointing out Christ's victory and the destruction of sin and death, the release of all the members of Adam's family from his sentence and eventually the bringing of all the willing back to fellowship with God and to eternal life. Between these two extremes of Divine Revelation are the assurances of the Prophets and the words of Jesus and His Apostles explaining the processes of redemption and reconciliation. St. Paul summarizes these with the statement, "By one man's [disobedience] sin entered into the world, and death as the result of sin, and thus death passed upon all men, because all are sinners." * * * As by one man's disobedience [the] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall [the] many be made righteous" (Romans v. 12-19).

Death a Ravenous Monster.

In the poetic language of Scripture death is symbolically represented as a great monster which has been swallowing up the human family, never satisfied. Millions on millions have already been devoured. Mankind in vain has looked for a Deliverer—for one able to vanquish death and to deliver the prisoners from the great prison-house of *sheol*, *hades*, the grave. This monster was granted permission to devour the race by Him Who created us, because we were unworthy of eternal life. Death, therefore, is backed by the mandate of the Almighty, and He cannot overthrow His own decision.

The Divine proposition is that whoever would meet the requirements of Justice against Adam and his race might purchase or ransom them, and have full right to deliver them from the prison-house, the tomb. For four thousand years there were promises looking forward to this great Messianic Deliverer, but only promises—nothing was accomplished. Finally, in due time, God sent forth His Son.

He says that "He came not to condemn the world (not to add to its condemnation, not to add to its sorrow or pain or trouble or hopelessness), but that the world through Him might be saved" from death—have life, perfect and everlasting, deliverance from the jaws of the monster and from his prison-house. But although more than eighteen centuries have since elapsed, the race is being swallowed up of this great monster, death, more voraciously than ever—nearly thousand every day. His prison-house, *sheol*, *hades*, the tomb, is supposed now to contain twenty thousand millions of Adam's children. Why the delay? Did God's plans go awry? Was the Savior insufficient for His work? Was His sacrifice imperfect and unsatisfactory?

The Scriptures assure us that the sacrifice that Jesus offered (Himself) was a satisfaction, "ransom-price," for the sins of the whole world. They tell us that the Heavenly Father manifested His approval of the sacrifice when He granted the Pentecostal blessing, and that Jesus is even now at the Father's right hand waiting (Hebrews x. 12, 13) until the time shall come when the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given to Him, that He may establish His reign of righteousness, blessing the world and releasing all the prisoners of Sin and Death.

The delay is not in any sense an indication of weakness, nor of any change in the Divine program. It merely indicates that there is another feature of the Almighty's purpose which we did not for a time discern. The work is to be a great one. Twenty thousand millions are to be delivered from death's prison-house. And all of them will need instruction, uplifting, chas-

tening, schooling, to prepare them for the Divine blessing of life everlasting. The time for instruction and uplifting is declared to be a thousand years. The power for the instruction is the Messianic Kingdom, the Rulers of which will be Messiah and His Bride—joint-heir with Him in His Kingdom. During the past nineteen centuries God, by His Word and providences, has been calling and drawing a "little flock" to Christ to be His Bride.

And not until all of these shall be called, drawn, tested, proven faithful unto death as followers in the Master's footsteps, will the elect Body be complete and the slaying of the great monster, Sin and Death, be begun and accomplished. For that day the saints are waiting and praying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" And for that day the whole creation is waiting, although not clearly informed respecting the blessings in store for them (Romans viii. 10, 21).

"The Last Enemy"—Death.

St. Paul points us to the great Deliverer, the glorified Messiah, at the time when He shall take the Kingdom under the whole heavens and begin the fulfillment of the prayer He taught us, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." He tells us He must reign until He shall have put all enemies under His feet—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians xv. 26). The meaning is clear. Messiah's Kingdom will address itself promptly to the rectification of every form of unrighteousness, financial, political, social, religious. He will rule the world with a rod of iron and every nation and every system or element contrary to the Divine standards of righteousness will be broken to shivers with His "iron rod." Thus will righteousness be established in the earth in the midst of "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation."

But the putting down of sin will be but the beginning of Messiah's work. Satan being bound, and the reign of sin thus stopped, each transgression will receive a just recompense and each good endeavor a just reward. Gradually mankind will rise out of sin and therefore proportionately come from under the power of death, until all the willing and obedient shall be fully delivered from all danger as respects the monster which has devoured our race for sixty centuries. Not only so, but those twenty thousand millions who have gone into the prison-house of death will be released—not all at once, but gradually, as the Apostle declares, "Every man in his own order," or band.

By the close of the thousand years of Messiah's reign, His victory over Sin and Death will be complete. Every member of Adam's race will have been lifted from the prison-house of death. It will be a prison-house no longer, for there will be no prisoners in it; mankind will have been lifted out of the clutches of Sin and Death, weakness and depravity, by the processes of restitution, resurrection, uplifting (Acts iii. 19-23). The victory over sin will be complete, because all who love sin and are willingly its servants, after being released from the condemnation of the Adamic death, will be destroyed in the Second Death. Thus Adamic Sin and Death will finally be completely routed and the prison-house of death be broken up. And Adam and his family, not willingly sinners, will all be set at liberty—restored to human perfection, as the earth will be brought to Edenic perfection.

"O Death, Where is Thy Sing?"

They will be brought to pass the Divine prophecy, "O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians xv. 55).

We must notice when this is to be brought to pass. It is not now true. The sting of death is in us all, for, as the Apostle explains, Sin is the sting of death. And because all have been stung by sin, all are dying. It will require the entire Messianic Age to fully extract from humanity the virus, the sting, of sin by bringing mankind to perfection. Only as the sting of death is removed will the power of death relax, because it is a part of the Divine Law that "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Death now has its sting. But when that which is perfect shall have come, the sting will be gone, the imperfection and weakness will be gone, the cause for sin will also be gone.

Not now, but then, will be brought to pass the saying, "O, Hades, where is thy victory?" *Hades*, *sheol*, the grave, has been having a victory over Adam's race for over sixty centuries. And its victory will not be entirely overturned until the Redeemer shall have delivered from the power of the grave the last member of the human family—for all of whom "He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us back to God."

Thus, as the Apostle says, with the culmination of Christ's Kingdom, with the deliverance of all mankind from the power of Sin and Death, death will be swallowed up in victory. The Apostle probably quoted from Hosea xiii. 14, where we read, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave (*sheol*); I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plague (gradual destruction); O grave (*sheol*), I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." The Almighty will never change or turn from this decision. Death and the grave, *sheol*, *hades* (the Bible hell), are to be destroyed. Every member of Adam's race is to be delivered by Him Who redeems all.

Keys of Death and Hades.

A key is a symbol of authority and symbolizes a legal power to open the prison-house and to release the prisoners. Adamic death has been a legal penalty upon our race—a just penalty. But although all shared the condemnation and weakness, God foresaw that

some of the race, if granted the opportunity, would gladly return to loyalty to His laws. He has, therefore, made provision through Jesus for every member of the race, great and small, rich and poor. World-wide redemption will be provided and world-wide opportunity for the coming to a knowledge of the Truth and for being uplifted or resurrected will be afforded. The right of power to release mankind from the power of death and from the prison-house of the tomb, *sheol*, *hades*, the grave, is represented by the key in the hands of Messiah. He gained that key, that rightful authority to set us free from the grave, by the redemption which He accomplished for us at Calvary.

This figure of the prison-house was used also by the Lord through Isaiah the Prophet. Is it not written that the Lord was anointed to preach a message of good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives of Sin and Death and the opening of the prison-house of death to those that are bound? And did not Jesus apply this very prophecy to Himself? (Isaiah lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18). Surely our Lord opened no earthly prison-doors at His first advent. But just as surely He foretold that He would open the prison-doors and set all the captives free. His death, "the Just for the unjust," was in order that He might have the rightful authority to release the prisoners—by His death He secured the key.

Eventually this glorious work will be consummated, and in the consummation of it the elect Church of this Gospel Age is invited to have a share. Hence the Church is called out from the world first under a special Covenant of sacrifice that she may with her Lord, the Redeemer, become part of the Seed of Abraham on the spirit plane (Galatians iii. 29).

Hades Cast into Gehenna.

"And death and hell (*hades*) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the Second Death" (Revelation xx. 14).

In the symbolic language of Revelation, Messiah's reign is described as a glorious opportunity for all mankind to come back into harmony with the Almighty and to attain everlasting life through the great Mediatorial Kingdom. The symbolic picture of which this text is a part, describes the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom, the saints of this Gospel Age being with Him in His throne, in His Kingdom, reigning with Him—a Royal Priesthood (Revelation xx. 4-6).

The context further describes that period, in which all mankind shall be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, when all will "stand before the great White Throne," Messiah's Judgment Throne, to be tried, to be tested, to be proven whether they will accept or refuse the perfection and eternal life which Divine mercy will then make possible for them. During that thousand years of Messiah's reign, as we have seen, death will be gradually swallowed up in victory. And as the prisoners of the tomb are gradually released, the grave will be destroyed, will be no more.

The statement, death and *hades* were cast into the lake of fire, which is the Second Death, is merely another way of explaining to us that Adamic death, and the grave connected therewith, will be superseded by the Second Death. Any of the race who, by the close of the Mediatorial reign, will not have come up to perfection and will not have gotten entirely free from the power of sin and the tomb, will themselves be responsible for their wrong condition, their imperfection. The great Mediator will have done everything right, proper and necessary for all. Whoever then will come short of eternal life will himself only be to blame. And the trial time over, any not fully delivered, any still held by sin and death, will be willingly held, and all such will be turned over to the Second Death, destruction, symbolized by fire, from which there will be no recovery.

Let it be remembered that the Valley of Hinnom, outside of Jerusalem, the earthly, where only the vile refuse was destroyed, will find its antitype in the Second Death, symbolically represented as a lake of fire outside the New Jerusalem. In it will be consumed utterly, completely, everything out of harmony with the Divine will.

The Wicked Returned to Sheol.

In the New Testament, as we have seen, *hades* stands for the grave or state of death, which results from Adam's transgression; while *Gehenna* represents the Second Death, which will come only upon those who shall first have been delivered from the Adamic sentence, or shall have had at least a full opportunity for deliverance and who will manifest their love for sin more than for righteousness and who, therefore, will be sentenced to the Second Death.

But in the Old Testament there is no distinctive word used to represent the Second Death—the extinction which will be the penalty of personal, wilful transgression. To meet the difficulty the word *sheol* is used a second time. For instance, we read of some who will be willfully wicked after enjoying a knowledge of the Truth—not merely inheritors of imperfection and weaknesses which they have not overcome, but intelligently wilful sinners—"The wicked shall be returned to *sheol* to be gathered with all people who forget God" (Psalm lx. 17). In our Common Version the prefix *re* is improperly omitted. The "wicked" are only those who sin against light, knowledge and opportunity, and only those can be said to forget God who have once known Him—who have been brought to a knowledge of the Truth and turned from it. Truly, my hearers, the resurrection hope is the great theme of the Bible.

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