

Message Two

Christ Having the Keys of Death and Hades

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:17-18; 10:7; 12:11; 15:1, 8; Acts 2:24; Phil. 3:10-11

I. “I am the First and the Last and the living One”—Rev. 1:17b-18a:

- A. Christ’s being the First and the Last implies that He will accomplish what He has begun.
- B. The Lord Jesus is not only the First but also the Beginning, and not only the Last but also the End—21:6; 22:13:
 - 1. *The First* indicates that none is before Him, and *the Last* that none is after Him.
 - 2. *The Beginning* indicates that He is the origination of all things, and *the End* that He is the consummation of all things.
 - 3. The indication here is not only that there is nothing before or after the Lord Jesus but also that there is no origination or consummation without Him.
- C. Christ is not only the First and the Last but also the Beginning and the End; this assures us that having started the church life, He will surely accomplish it—cf. 2 Tim. 4:5:
 - 1. The Lord Jesus will never leave His work unfinished—Rev. 10:7; 15:1, 8.
 - 2. All the local churches must believe that the Lord Jesus is the Beginning and the End.
 - 3. He will accomplish what He has begun in His recovery.
- D. The Christ who walks in the midst of the churches, who is the Head of the churches and to whom the churches belong, is the living One; hence, the churches also, as the expression of the Body, should be living, fresh, and strong—2:1.

II. “I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever”— 1:18a:

- A. The Lord suffered death and lived again—2:8.
- B. Christ entered into death, but death could not hold Him (Acts 2:24), because He is the resurrection (John 11:25).
- C. Resurrection is the lengthening of the Lord’s days; He will exist forever and ever in His resurrection:
 - 1. Jesus Christ today is the living One, the One who is in resurrection.
 - 2. For Christ to dispense life, He must be the living One.
- D. The importance of Christ’s being the living One is that He is living forever and is living in us:
 - 1. He wants us to leave every kind of death and rise up to be the living church.
 - 2. The more living we are, the more we are the testimony of the living Jesus—Rev. 12:11.

III. “In which also He [Christ] went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison”— 1 Pet. 3:19:

- A. *The spirits* here refers not to the disembodied spirits of dead human beings held in Hades but to the angels (angels are spirits—Heb. 1:14) who fell through disobedience at Noah’s time and are imprisoned in pits of gloom, awaiting the judgment of the great day—2 Pet. 2:4-5; Jude 6.
- B. After His death in the flesh, Christ in His living Spirit as His divinity went to the abyss to these rebellious angels to proclaim God’s victory, accomplished through

His incarnation in Christ and Christ's death in the flesh, over Satan's scheme to derange the divine plan.

- C. *Prison* (1 Pet. 3:19) refers to Tartarus, the deep and gloomy pits, where the fallen angels are kept.

IV. "I saw a star out of heaven fallen to the earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss"—Rev. 9:1-2; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3:

- A. The star in Revelation 9:1 refers to Satan, who will be cast down from heaven to earth:
 - 1. The angels are likened to stars—Job 38:7; Rev. 12:4.
 - 2. Satan, as the archangel, was the Daystar—Isa. 14:12.
- B. "Who will descend into the abyss?" that is, to bring Christ up from the dead"—Rom. 10:7:
 - 1. In Greek the word rendered as "abyss" is *abyssos*.
 - 2. This word is used in Luke 8:31 in reference to the dwelling place of the demons—vv. 27, 33, 35, 38.
 - 3. It also occurs in Revelation 9:1-2 and 11 to denote the place out of which the "locusts," whose king is Apollyon, will come.
 - 4. In Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 it signifies the place out of which the beast, which is the Antichrist, will ascend.
 - 5. In Revelation 20:1 and 3 it specifies the place into which Satan will be cast and imprisoned during the millennium.
 - 6. In Romans 10:7 *abyss* points to the place Christ visited after His death and before His resurrection, which place, according to Acts 2:24 and 27, is Hades, for Acts 2:24 and 27 reveal that Christ went into Hades after He died and rose from that place in His resurrection.
 - 7. According to biblical usage, the word *abyss* always refers to the region of death and of Satan's power of darkness into which Christ after His death descended as into the lower parts of the earth (Eph. 4:9), which He conquered, and from which He ascended in His resurrection.

V. In Revelation 1:18b the Lord Jesus says, "I have the keys of death and of Hades":

- A. Due to the fall and the sin of man, death has come in and is now operating on earth to collect all sinful people and to bring them to Hades, the place where the dead are kept.
- B. In the church life, however, we are no longer subject to death and Hades—Phil. 3:10-11.
- C. Christ abolished death on the cross, and He overcame Hades in His resurrection:
 - 1. Although death tried its best to hold Christ, it was powerless to do so—Acts 2:24.
 - 2. Christ is both God and resurrection (John 1:1; 11:25), possessing the indestructible life (Heb. 7:16).
 - 3. Because He is such an ever-living One, death is not able to hold Him.
 - 4. Christ delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to detain Him; instead, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it.
 - 5. With Christ, therefore, death has no sting, and Hades has no power.
- D. Because Christ is the One in the church who is the Holder of the keys of death and Hades, death and Hades should not have any power over us.

- E. In the church life the keys of death and Hades are in the Lord's hand.
- F. It is impossible for us to deal with death:
 - 1. We simply do not have the ability to handle it.
 - 2. Whenever death enters, many will be overcome by it.
- G. If we give the Lord Jesus the ground, the opportunity, and the free way to move and act among us, both death and Hades will be under His control—Matt. 16:18; Rev. 20:14:
 - 1. When the Lord Jesus does not have the ground in the church, death immediately becomes prevailing, and Hades becomes powerful to hold the dead ones.
 - 2. It is crucial for us to see that Christ has the keys, the authority, of death and Hades—John 5:27; 17:2; Rev. 12:10.
 - 3. Death is subject to Him, and Hades is under His control.
- H. We should praise the Lord that Christ has the keys of death and of Hades—1:18; Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rev. 19:5-6.