

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR

LESSON TWENTY-FIVE: DEATH AND HELL CONQUORED

by Sandy Harber

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last." Revelation 1:17

John, the author of Revelation, recorded not only his visions but also his own reactions to what he witnessed. Chapter one sets the scene for the readers, John the Apostle received a vision filled with symbols depicting the events of the future for the Church and Israel. He heard a voice speaking to him (v. 10) so he turned around (v. 12). What he saw - or, rather, Who he saw - caused him to fall down as though dead.

What/Who did John see? The glorified Christ standing before him dressed in a long robe cinched at the chest with a golden girdle. His hair was white, His eyes shone as a flame of fire, and His feet were like gleaming brass. All of this symbolism speaks of judgment. Jesus, now dressed as a Judge, had spoken of this time when God the Father would turn all judgment over to Him, the Son of Man (John 5:25-27). Fire and brass are symbols of judgment in Scripture. The brazen altar was the place where the sacrifices for sin were burned in the Temple. Jesus' eyes see everything (Prov. 15:3) so His judgment is true. He pronounces judgment in a powerful, authoritative voice that sounds like the roaring of a waterfall (v. 15). And the words that come out of His mouth are sharp and cut like a sword (v. 16). It is the living and powerful Word of God that slices through the lies and deceit and exposes the naked truth (Heb. 4:12). Jesus stood before John in all His glory. Perhaps it reminded him of the day that he, Peter, and James had witnessed the transformation on the mountain where Moses and Elijah appeared beside Him (Mt. 17:2).

John had been Jesus' companion for three and a half years before His crucifixion. But the Jesus that stood before him now was not the humble Teacher Who spoke in parables and healed the sick. That was the Lamb of God destined to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This Jesus that stands before him is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5) destined to conquer and rule the earth as the King of Kings (Rev. 19:13-16). No wonder John fell at His feet!

"Fear not," Jesus said. Then He goes on to describe Himself. He is the first and the last. That is, He is eternal. He is God. But He goes on to explain that, while He was indeed God, He became human. He lived, died, and was resurrected as a human being. John knew all of this to be true. He witnessed it. Finally, Jesus states that He has the keys of hell and death.

Keys are a symbol of authority. The person who held the keys of the royal house had control over what was opened or closed (Isaiah 22:22). Jesus has control over hell and death because He overcame them by His atoning death and bodily resurrection (I Cor. 15:55-57). We, therefore, have no need to fear death or hell because Jesus has defeated both. He has released us from the punishment of hell by dying in our place. And He has released us from the sting of death because we shall live forever in our incorruptible, immortal bodies (I Cor. 15:51-54). Jesus has opened the doors of death and hell for us to escape and no one has the power or authority to close that door. Two of mankind's greatest fears have been nullified. Fear not!

*"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
I Corinthians 15:57*