

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

Rev. 1:17-18—And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead; and He placed His right hand on me, saying, Do not fear; I am the First and the Last ¹⁸And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Rev. 10:7—But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he is about to trumpet, then the mystery of God is finished, as He has announced the good news to His own slaves the prophets.

Rev. 12:11—And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

Rev. 15:1—And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, the last *plagues*; for in them the fury of God was finished.

Rev. 15:8—And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one could enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Acts 2:24—Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

Phil. 3:10-11—To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.

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:

Rev. 21:6—And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely.

Rev. 22:13—I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

- 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:

cf. 2 Tim. 4:5—But you, be sober in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelist, fully accomplish your ministry.

- 1. The Lord Jesus will never leave His work unfinished—Rev. 10:7; 15:1, 8.

Rev. 10:7—But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he is about to trumpet, then the mystery of God is finished, as He has announced the good news to His own slaves the prophets.

Rev. 15:1—And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, the last *plagues*; for in them the fury of God was finished.

Rev. 15:8—And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one could enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

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.

Rev. 2:1—To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

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

- A. The Lord suffered death and lived again—2:8.
Rev. 2:8—And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived *again*:
- B. Christ entered into death, but death could not hold Him (Acts 2:24), because He is the resurrection (John 11:25).
Acts 2:24—Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.
John 11:25—Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
- 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.
Rev. 12:11—And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

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 dis-

obedience 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.

Heb. 1:14—Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth for service for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

2 Pet. 2:4-5—For if God did not spare the angels who sinned but delivered *them* to gloomy pits, having cast them down to Tartarus, they being kept for judgment; ⁵And did not spare the ancient world but guarded Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Jude 6—And angels who did not keep their own principality but abandoned their own dwelling place, He has kept in eternal bonds under gloom for the judgment of the great day;

- 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.

1 Pet. 3:19—In which also He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,

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:

Rev. 9:1-2—And the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star out of heaven fallen to the earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss. ²And he opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke went up out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

Rev. 11:7—And when they have completed their testimony, the beast who comes up out of the abyss will make war with them and will overcome them and kill them.

Rev. 17:8—The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into perdition. And those who dwell on the earth, *those* whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, will marvel when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will be present.

Rev. 20:1—And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Rev. 20:3—And cast him into the abyss and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be loosed for a little while.

- A. The star in Revelation 9:1 refers to Satan, who will be cast down from heaven to earth:

Rev. 9:1—And the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star out of heaven fallen to the earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss.

- 1. The angels are likened to stars—Job 38:7; Rev. 12:4.

Job 38:7—When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Rev. 12:4—And his tail drags away the third part of the stars of heaven, and he cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, so that when she brings forth he might devour her child.

2. Satan, as the archangel, was the Daystar—Isa. 14:12.

Isa. 14:12—How you have fallen from heaven, O Daystar, son of the dawn! How you have been hewn down to earth, You who made nations fall prostrate!

- 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.

Luke 8:31—And they entreated Him not to order them to depart into the abyss.

Luke 8:27—And when He went out onto the land, a certain man out of the city, who had demons, met *Him*, and for a considerable time he had not put on clothes and did not remain in a house but among the tombs.

Luke 8:33—And the demons came out from the man and entered into the hogs, and the herd rushed down the steep slope into the lake and was drowned.

Luke 8:35—And *the people* went out to see what had happened. And they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had come out, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and sane, and they became frightened.

Luke 8:38—And the man from whom the demons had come out begged to be with Him, but He sent him away, saying,

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.

Rev. 9:1-2—And the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star out of heaven fallen to the earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss. ²And he opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke went up out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

Rev. 9:11—They have a king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon; and in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

4. In Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 it signifies the place out of which the beast, which is the Antichrist, will ascend.

Rev. 11:7—And when they have completed their testimony, the beast who comes up out of the abyss will make war with them and will overcome them and kill them.

Rev. 17:8—The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into perdition. And those who dwell on the earth, *those* whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, will marvel when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will be present.

5. In Revelation 20:1 and 3 it specifies the place into which Satan will be cast and imprisoned during the millennium.
Rev. 20:1—And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Rev. 20:3—And cast him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be loosed for a little while.
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.
Rom. 10:7—Or, “Who will descend into the abyss?” that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.

Acts 2:24—Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

Acts 2:27—Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor will You permit Your Holy One to see corruption.
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.
Eph. 4:9—(Now this, “He ascended,” what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

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.
Phil. 3:10-11—To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
- 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.
Acts 2:24—Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.
 2. Christ is both God and resurrection (John 1:1; 11:25), possessing the indestructible life (Heb. 7:16).
John 1:1—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 11:25—Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

Heb. 7:16—Who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.

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:

Matt. 16:18—And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Rev. 20:14—And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

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.

John 5:27—And He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man.

John 17:2—Even as You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.

Rev. 12:10—And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.

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.

Rev. 1:18—And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Heb. 13:15—Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.

1 Pet. 1:7—So that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Rev. 19:5-6—And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all His slaves and those who fear Him, the small and the great. ⁶And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.