

# THE FOREST HILL NEWS



## **Forest Hill Church of Christ**

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## **VISIT US SOON!**

### **Sunday:**

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.  
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study .....7:00 P.M.

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Words of the Master (Memphis  
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## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Bobby Liddell

As we stand by the graveside, sorrowful because of loss, our minds naturally ponder the place (and state) of our departed loved ones. We wonder, "Where are the dead?" The wisdom of man fails to enlighten us, for it offers no valid answer. The inability of the dead to communicate their whereabouts leaves us with no sure word from those alone who now know of a certainty, having passed through the doorway separating time from eternity, mortal from immortal, corruptible from incorruptible—life from death.

Obviously, death is a separation, for it divides the departed from the living, severing the ties of earth (cf. I Cor. 7:39). The Holy Scriptures declare death to be the separation of the spirit from the body (Jam. 2:26). All know the body, forsaken by the departed soul, bereft of the quickening spirit, begins to decay (John 11:39). Thus, we bury our dead out of our sight (Gen. 23:4). So, we can account for the physical remains (cf. Acts 2:29), but what about the true man, the inner man which motivated the body, giving it life (II Cor. 4:16)?

The wise man stated: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). The spirit of man lives on, for it is not constrained by a coffin, not buried in the grave (cf. Acts 2:27). Thus, Jesus could truly affirm God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, because the spirit (in the context [v. 26], which specifically names Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom were long since dead) lives on (Mark 12:27). Man does not cease to exist at death, nor is he annihilated after his decease (Luke 16:19-31). David and Bathsheba lost their son, but of his son's continuing existence, following his demise, David had no doubt, and he looked to the time when he could go to his son (II Sam. 12:23).

While the dead sleep with the fathers (cf. I Kings 11:21), they are not in "limbo" (the Catholic doctrine which keeps "unbaptized children" from Heaven on "account of original sin alone"), nor are they in "purgatory" (the Catholic doctrine of a temporary abode of those who "have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions"). Neither are they wandering the earth as disembodied spirits, haunting, punishing, and tormenting their enemies as some so forcefully contend. The dead are not on earth invisibly guiding, protecting, comforting, or aiding their loved ones as others would wistfully assert. Concerning the current events of earth, "the

dead know not any thing" (Ecc. 9:5). This is not to affirm unconsciousness, or lack of memory, of the dead, but the fact that the dead do not intervene, nor are they knowledgeable of what transpires on earth after their parting (cf. Mat. 2:20).

God said to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead" (Jos. 1:2). Where did Moses go? More than fourteen centuries after his death, he appeared to Peter, James, and John, and talked with Jesus (Mat. 17:3). Therefore, he did not cease to exist, although his earthly life had ended. He had gone to another place, but where? To answer, notice how Jesus depicted the departure of two very different men (Luke 16). A "certain rich man" died, and lifted up his eyes "being in torments" in hades (which means "unseen"—so called because those on earth cannot see the place to which the departed spirits go). Lazarus, poor, pitiable beggar, also died, and went to "Abraham's bosom," or paradise (cf. Luke 23:43), also in the unseen realm.

There they await the pronouncement of judgment, and consignment to their final abode; the rich man shall be forever in Hell, a place of "everlasting punishment"; the beggar shall be forever in Heaven, a place of "life eternal" (Mat. 25:31-46). Thus, the wicked dead suffer in torments, and the righteous dead are comforted in paradise. What of the body, left behind by the fleeing spirit? The body awaits the day of resurrection (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). Reunited with the spirit, a new body, changed from mortal to immortal (cf. I John 3:1-2), shall be the perfect, perpetual domicile of the eternal spirit (I Cor. 15).

When Christ returns, the dead will be raised, the living will be changed, and He will judge the world (Acts 17:30-31), condemning the wicked to eternity in the fiery darkness of Hell, and rewarding the righteous with entrance into the beauty and glory of Heaven. Death and hades will be no more (Rev. 20:12-15).

To reach old age, as did Job, would be the desire of mankind; however, "Job died, being old and full of days" (Job 42:17). Of Methuselah, who lived to be 969 years old, the greatest recorded age of any man, Moses wrote, "and he died" (Gen. 5:27). All face the appointment with death (Heb. 9:27), "but after this the judgment," and each accountable person will determine where he shall be after this life (II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12). Heaven and Hell are real, and are the ultimate destinations for the dead, whose spirits shall live on forever and ever. Thus, our greater concern should be, "Where will *we* be when we die?"

## 666: IMPENDING DOOM, OR MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING? (part 2)

Matthew Martin

### PREREQUISITES TO UNDERSTANDING “666”

First, it must be understood that this passage (Rev. 13:15-18) *can* be understood. Perhaps one of the greatest misunderstanding concerning the Bible is that it is a book that cannot be comprehended. Why would God spend century after century inspiring men to write a book that could not be understood anyway? Sheer *logic* tells us that the book ought to be understandable.

Though it is in the context of miraculous gifts, the statement Paul makes is still applicable: “For God is not the author of **confusion...**” (1 Cor. 14:33). God does not seek to confuse us. The reason there is so much confusion concerning, not just Revelation, but all of the Bible, is because *man* has allowed himself to be confused. If one would read the Bible with an open and cognizant mind he would find the Bible, including the book of Revelation, to be easily understood.

Second, the reader must be aware that the book of Revelation was written in a particular *style*. The Bible contains sections of history, but it is not just a history book. Likewise does it contain great sections of poetry, others of law, and others of prophesy. But it is neither a poetry book, nor just a book of law. Instead, the Bible contains many different styles of writing.

Revelation, in particular, is what is called “apocalyptic literature.” It was written with the use of symbols. John wrote the book while in forced-exile on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). Because of this, any letter he sent out would have been “screened” by Roman authorities. Imagine if John had sent a letter that plainly detailed, among other things, the destruction of the Roman Empire. Would *you* have let that letter get out, if you were the Romans? Obviously, a more cryptic style of writing was needed.

John used an apocalyptic (literally: to uncover) style, heavy on symbols, as a way to get his message out. To the Roman, the words are mere gibberish. To the Christian, they contain a message of hope and ultimate victory in Christ. Is its coded message sometimes difficult to decipher? Yes. But can it *be* deciphered? Yes!

Third, it must be understood that Revelation was written for a specific *purpose*, and that purpose was not to tell of some destroyer of the world 2,000 years in the future.

(to be continued)

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