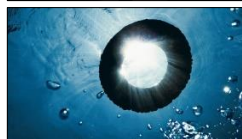
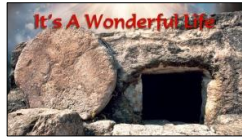


An Easter Carol

The Rise of the Ghosts of Christ

April 9, 2023

Today is *Easter*! And **He is risen! He is risen indeed!** And not only that, but regarding those set free from death: **They have risen! They have risen indeed!** And not only *that*, but we who believe in their heart that He rose from the dead: **We will rise! We will rise indeed!**



Which leads me to the question: **What do you think about ghosts?** Two things I love about Christmas: “It’s A Wonderful Life”, and “A Christmas Carol”. But the first would make a good title for an *Easter* movie, and the second **is about a man’s redemption after confronting the dead and his own death** – far more appropriate for *Easter*. So let’s have us an *Easter Carol* and talk about the wonderful life of the *ghosts of Christ, past, present, and future!* So what do you think about *ghosts*? Not a topic too many Christians are comfortable talking about, let alone on *Easter*. But God *bless us, everyone*:

The *ghosts* of the dead *writhe* under the *waters* along with *those who live* there *with* them. Sheol [or Hades] is *naked* before God and Abaddon [lit. Destruction] has *no clothes*. – Job 26:5-6 ISV

You can’t tell *but ... no clothes ... or bodies*. And *wow*, where to *start?! “The ghosts”, “under the waters”, “along with those who live there with them”?* Well: *before Jesus!* And, *well* before Jesus, Solomon saw His *day*, and said:

God shall *judge* the *righteous* and the *wicked ... [but until then] All go to one place ... all return to dust. ... they go to the dead*. – Ecc. 3:20; 9:3 NKJ

To *Sheol* in Hebrew, or *Hades* in Greek, or *also the underworld*. “Isn’t this a bit morbid for *Easter*?” This *is Easter!* Cuz **whatever Sheol really was, it symbolized a very real realm where all disembodied spirits were imprisoned ... till Easter!** From King Hezekiah who said, when *condemned to death* for his *sin*:

“I shall go to the *gates of Sheol ... [and] I shall not see YAH*” [The Lord’s name that’s praised by the *living ... dead*] – Isaiah 38:10-11 NKJ

To *righteous* King David who *confidently* said:

If I make my *bed* in *Sheol*, behold, You *are* there. [He even says “I will see Your face” (Ps 17:15)] ... If I dwell in the *remotest* part of the *sea*, [there’s that *water*] even *there* Your *hand* will ... *lay hold of me*. – Psalm 139:8-10 NAS

[Because, as Jesus said] “The *gates of Hades* shall not prevail” – Matthew 16:18 NKJ

[Even though] The *pains* of death *surrounded* me, and ... *Sheol laid hold of me* – Psalm 116:3 NKJ

[For] neither *death* nor *life ... nor height* nor *depth ... shall be able to separate* us from the *love of God* which is in *Christ Jesus our Lord*. – Romans 8:38-39 NKJ

[So] Ask for a *sign* ... from the *depths* of *Sheol* to the *heights* of *heaven*. – Isaiah 7:11 HCS



Yet no sign will be given [Jesus warned] ... but the *sign* of *Jonah* ... for just as *Jonah* was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. – Matthew 12:39-40 NAS



How does Jesus check out of the *Hades hotel* on the *third morning*, but is *back* in the *heart of Hades* the *third night*? **He goes back!** Kind of a *no-brainer*. Cuz He *vanishes* the *third night* till *midnight*. But let's look at the *sign of Jonah*! Because:

[Jonah said] "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried ... for You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me [See the sign?] – Jonah 2:2-3 NKJ

Jonah's watery grave became the universal symbol used by the *prophetic poets* in Scripture **to picture Sheol**. So, it *unlocks* and *allows* us to see all **the Psalms of the ghosts of Easter past** – who say:

[Let not] the *deep* swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me. ... Draw *near* to my soul, and *redeem* it ... set me up on *high*. ... [For the Lord] does not despise His *prisoners*. ... [So] [Let] the *seas* and *everything* that *moves* in them [praise Him]. – Psalm 69:15-34 NKJ

I am counted with *those* who *go down* to the pit ... *adrift* among the *dead* ... in the lowest pit [Lowest? Lowest!] ... in the *depths*. ... and *I* cannot get out ... Will You *work wonders* for the *dead*? [He will *indeed*!] Shall the *dead* *arise* and *praise* You? [They shall *indeed*!] Shall Your *lovingkindness* be declared *in the grave*? [It shall *indeed*!] Or Your *faithfulness* in the place of destruction? [Hold up. *That's the word: Abaddon*] – Psalm 88 NKJ

And the *answer* is: **YES!** Because they had the Lord's *promise* of a '*rescue at sea*', if you will.



"I will *ransom* them from the *power* of the *grave*; I will *redeem* them from *death*. [So those who waited for YAH to *show up in Sheol*, *prayed* and *watched* for the day He'd *appear* and *say*] O *Death*, I will be your *plagues*! O *Grave*, I will be your *destruction*!" – Hosea 13:14 NKJ



Cuz *they* didn't *go* to the *lowest pit*. *Lowest? Lowest!* One *place*. Two *floors*. A *basement banquet hall* for *friends*. A *boiler room below* for *foes*. Remember when wicked King *Saul* got a *witch* to bring up the *ghost* of *righteous Samuel*? No? Okay!

She cried out at the top of her voice [cuz until the Lord *allowed* it, like Whoopi in the movie "Ghost", she'd never actually seen a *real one*] ... [She] said, "I see a *ghostly figure coming up out of the earth*." ... [and *righteous*] *Samuel* said to [wicked King] *Saul* ... [The Lord has] become your *enemy* ... [and] *tomorrow* you ... will be with *me*." – 1 Samuel 28:12-19 NIV

The *righteous* with the *wicked*? For a while. In Jesus' parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus", He describes a *paradise up above*, and a *painfulness below* – where they'd rather be *served* than *saved*.



[Lazarus] *died*, and was carried by the angels to *Abraham's bosom*. The [wicked] rich man also *died* and was buried ... in *torments* in *Hades*, [but] he *lifted up* his eyes and saw *Abraham* ... [and said] 'Send *Lazarus* ... [to] cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this *flame*.' – Luke 16:22-25 NKJ

Those are flames of **wrath** against **wickedness**; cuz, before He *died* on the cross, the Lord *did* say:



"A fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the *lowest part* of Sheol [**Lowest? Lowest!**] ... and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains." – Deuteronomy 32:22 NAS



[And Jonah said] "I sank to the foundations of the mountains, the earth's *gates* shut behind me *forever!* Then You *raised* my *life* from the *Pit*" [**and then from the fish**] – Jonah 2:5-6 CSB



[And just before] Jesus cried with a loud voice, and *gave up* the *ghost*. – Mark 15:37 KJV

[The criminal] [**on the cross next to Him, repented and**] said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, [**let's not get ahead of ourselves**] today you will be with Me in paradise." – Luke 23:42-43 NIV

Cuz **that's STEP ONE**. Cuz *two days later*, when Jesus rose [**as in "up"**] on Easter morning:

Jesus said to [**an understandably clingy**] [Mary Magdalene], "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father" – John 20:17 NKJ

So *where'd* He *been*? **Not up in heaven with the Father**; but **down in paradise with the criminal!** And prior to *all* of this, just before He brought *Martha's real-life* brother Lazarus *back to life*:



Jesus said to *her*, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know [from OT Scripture] that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection [at the last day] and the life. [**That's Me!**] He who believes in *Me*, though he may *die*, he *shall live*. And whoever *lives* and *believes* in *Me* shall *never die*." – John 11:23-26 NKJ



Starting when *He rose!* Not a lot of talk in the OT about the resurrection of the dead. But **Hosea and Isaiah get specific about God raising up the souls of Sheol**. So, we know what *Martha's* referring to.

[Hosea says] Come, let us return to the Lord. For ... He will heal us ... He will *revive* us *after two days*; [and] He will raise us up [from Sheol] on the third [and last] day, that we may live *before* Him. [**In heaven**] ... His *appearance* is as *sure* as the *dawn* [**on day three!**] – Hosea 6:1-3 NAS

[And Isaiah says] He was *pierced* for our *transgressions* ... and by *His wounds* we are healed. [**And therefore and thereby raised up on the third and last day!**] – Isaiah 53:5 NIV

For the Lord himself will come *down* from *heaven*, with a loud command ... and the dead in Christ will rise *first*. [**On the third – and last – day**] – 1 Thessalonians 4:16 NIV

For [**even**] David did not ascend to heaven [**apart from Christ**] – Acts 2:34 NIV

[Jesus said] "I have *come down* from *heaven* ... And this is the will of Him who sent Me ... [to] lose *none* of *all* that He has *given* Me, but raise them up at the last day." – John 6:38-39 NIV

[Because] "I *am* the way, the *truth*, and the *life*. [And] No one comes to the Father except through *Me*." [Not even those who *died before Me*] – John 14:6 NKJ

[So] Blessed are the [naked] *dead* who die *in* the Lord from *now on* – Revelation 14:13 NKJ



For if *we live*, we *live* to the Lord; and if *we die*, we *die* to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to *this end* Christ *died* and *rose* and *lived again*, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. – Romans 14:8-9 NKJ



[Christ died] to bring *you* to *God*. ... [And] *also* He *went* and *preached* to the [disembodied] spirits in *prison* who disobeyed long ago – 1 Peter 3:18-20 NIV

All those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him – Psalm 22:29 NKJ



"For a time is coming [Jesus said] when *all* who are in their graves will hear [the Son of Man's] voice [cuz He went and preached to 'em] and come out— those [ghosts of Easter present] who have done good will rise to live," ["before Him"] – John 5:28-29 NIV

[Because] [The Lord] brings *down* to Sheol and raises *up*. [to heaven] – 1 Samuel 2:6 NAS

[And David said] "You will not *leave* my *soul* in Sheol" – Psalm 16:10 NKJ

You have [already] *delivered* my *soul* from the [lowest] *depths* of Sheol. – Psalm 86:13 NKJ

[And] God will *redeem* my *soul* from the *power* of Sheol – Psalm 49:15 NAS

[But] Who can *escape* the *power* of Sheol? – Psalm 89:48 NRS

[Jesus Christ] the firstborn from the dead ... [who] washed us from our sins in His own blood – Revelation 1:5 NKJ

The *prophets* and *Moses* said ... He would be the *first* to *rise* from the *dead* – Acts 26:22-23 NKJ

And, speaking of the ghosts of Easter future: on the Mount of Transfiguration:

Moses and Elijah, *appeared* ... *talking* with Jesus. They spoke about His departure, which He was *about* to *bring* to *fulfillment* at Jerusalem. – Luke 9:30-31 NIV



His *departure*? Why's He talking to *them* about it? Because:

Behold, [Daniel foresaw] One like the Son of Man, coming [to a heavenly throne] *with* the clouds of heaven! ... and *they* [the clouds of heaven] brought Him near before [the Ancient of Days]. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom – Daniel 7:13-14 NKJ

Cuz *that's* **STEP TWO!** Remember when His disciples *watched* Him *ascend* into *heaven* that *night*?

He was *taken up* [carried up (Lk 24:51)] before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him – Acts 1:9 NIV

[Cuz, Isaiah said] They all gather together, [and] they come to You ... because the *abundance* of the *sea* shall be *turned* to You ... [and] They shall *ascend* with *acceptance* ... "Who are these who fly like a cloud?" – Isaiah 60:4-8 NKJ

It's our "great cloud of witnesses!" (Heb 12:1) But they're *not ghosts!* They're *restored corpses!* Which is why it was so *significant to bring* them, *singing* an *Easter carol*, out of their *tombs*.

Behold ... The *tombs* were opened, and many [undead] bodies of the saints who had fallen *asleep* were *raised*; and coming out of the *tombs* after *His* resurrection *they* entered the holy city and appeared to many. – Matthew 27:51-53 NAS

Awake, awake ... clothe yourself with *strength*. Put on your garments of splendor ... *Shake* off your *dust*; *rise up* ... *free* yourself from the *chains* – Isaiah 52:1-2 NIV

[Because] The *Longing* soul ... in the *shadow* of *death*, bound in affliction and irons ... [He brought] out of *darkness* ... and *broke* their *chains* in *pieces*. – Psalm 107:10, 14 NKJ

I waited patiently for the Lord; and He ... brought me *up* out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay ... He has put a new song [of Easter] in my mouth—*many* will see it [when those tombs open] and *fear*, and will *trust* in the *Lord*. – Psalm 40:1-3 NKJ

"You're a g-g-g-ghost!" "Nope! I'm a restored corpse! Happy Easter! Read your Bible!"

The [wicked] *dead* don't *live*; [cuz] ghosts don't rise. ... we *writhed*, but ... [we] achieved no *victories* [also translated: salvation or deliverance] ... [But] *Your dead will live, their corpses will rise, [fully restored]* and those who *dwell* in the *dust* will *shout* for *joy*. [Because] Your shadow is a shadow of light, [Picture that shadow in the valley of the shadow of death!] but You will bring down the *ghosts* into the *underworld*. [Because Proverbs 21:16 says, "A man who wanders from the way ... will remain in the assembly of the dead." So] Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you ... [for] a little while – Isaiah 26:14-20 CEB

[And] *Then, the same day at evening* ... when the *doors* were *shut* where the *disciples* were ... Jesus came [back] and stood [quietly] in the midst – John 20:19 NKJ



[Jesus] stood [unnoticed] *among* them and [not not-having fun] said to them, "*Peace* be with you." [Also translated: Boo!] They were *startled* and *frightened*, *thinking* they saw a *ghost*. [But] He said to them ... "*Touch Me* and *see*; a *ghost* does not have *flesh* and *bones* ... This is what is written: [in Hosea and Isaiah] The Christ will *suffer* and *rise* from the *dead* on the *third* [and last] *day* – Luke 24:36-46 NIV

"Oh that You would hide me in *Sheol* [says Job] ... until Your *wrath* *returns* to You, [on the cross] that You would set a *limit* for me and *remember* me!" – Job 14:13 NAS

[One of his so-called comforters says] "Can you discover the *limits* of the Almighty? They are *high* as the *heavens* ... [and] *deeper* than *Sheol*, what can you know?" – Job 11:7-8 NAS

[And Job says] "I know that my Redeemer *lives*, and He shall stand *at last* on the earth; and *after* my *skin* is *destroyed*, *this* I know, that in my *flesh* I shall see God – Job 19:25-27 NKJ

[You see] Christ died for our sins [Paul later writes] ... [and] rose again the third day according to the Scriptures [in Hosea and Isaiah] ... But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not *risen*. [Cuz Daniel (7:13-14) says that's who carries Him to the throne! So] ... If the *dead* do not *rise*, then *Christ* is not *risen*. – 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 12-19 NKJ

And they *had* to rise, cuz there's something *vital* that the *unrisen, disembodied dead* can't do:

The dead do *not* hallelu [*praise*] YAH, nor do *any* who go *down* into *silence*. But we [*who ascend*] will *bless* YAH from this time forth and forevermore. – Psalm 115:17-18 ESV

^{5:13} And [*John saw*] every creature which is *in heaven* and *on the earth* and *under the earth* and *such* as are *in the sea* ^{7:9} *before* the throne and *before* the Lamb, *clothed* ... [*and*] ^{7:10} crying out with a loud voice ... ^{14:2} like the voice of many *waters* ... ^{14:4} being *firstfruits* to *God* and to the *Lamb* [*“of God who takes away sin” (Jn 1:29)*] ... ^{19:1} saying, “hallelu YAH!” – Revelation 5:13; 7:9-10; 14:2, 4; 19:1 NKJ

Because, **He is risen! He is risen indeed!** And **they have risen! They have risen indeed!** And **we** (who declare with our mouth what we believe in our heart) **will rise! We will rise indeed!**



So, don't be caught dead in your sin!

Live as children of light ... This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine [*that shadow of light*] on you.” – Ephesians 5:8, 14 NIV

God bless us, *everyone!*