

The Souls Under the Altar

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I. Introduction. (Revelation 6:9)

II. The place of the altar-in heaven.

A. Revelation shifts continually between heaven and earth, so it takes a great deal of study to determine where the scenes of the book are taking place.

B. There is a call for patience to the saints until God's timing is complete-when the rest of the saints will join the communion in heaven.

III. The souls of the righteous-those under the altar in heaven.

A. There are those who say that the body and the soul are inseparable, but the Scripture teaches differently.

1. Luke 20:46: Jesus gave up His spirit.

2. 1 Peter 3:8-20: Jesus preached to the spirits in prison - in Sheoul - who were dead before Christ.

3. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4: a man who knew a man who said he may have been out of the body.

B. There are those that say that the soul sleeps until the resurrection.

1. Luke 16:22: the beggar died and was taken into Abraham's bosom and another that was taken to another place.

2. The body could not have been carried there because the body was buried.

3. The rich man fared too well to actually be in the grave.

4. Luke 23:43: that day the man would be with Jesus in paradise.

C. The dead saints go immediately to God.

1. 2 Corinthians 5: Paul recognized that our bodies decompose, and that no one wanted to be unclothed-a naked soul.

2. Philippians 1:21: to die and go to heaven would be a gain, but to go and sleep in the ground would not be gain.

3. Paul had two ideas of where he would live - either in the flesh or outside the flesh with the Lord.

D. The church has always held that those who die go immediately to heaven.

1. Beware of false teachers who teach soul sleeping. They tell people:

- a. All Christians have always been wrong and they are right.
- b. All translations are warped.
- c. All other modern day Christians are wrong.
- d. All interpreters are wrong.

2. By your fruits you shall know them: do these people lead better lives than the rest?

E. Why the souls had not been heard from previously.

- 1. No one had opened the book to open the seals.
- 2. When Jesus Christ was found, he opened the book of seals.

V. Four states of the ransomed man.

A. Lost on earth without hope and without God in the world.

B. Saved on earth.

C. Died and waiting in heaven.

D. Glorified at the Lord's return.

- 1. What about the body?
- 2. The Lord is not as concerned with the body as we are, but he will take care of it.

VI. The opening of the sixth seal in Revelation-the times of wrath.

A. We are going to see things-heavenly phenomenon.

B. The wrath of the Lamb will come.

- 1. Today is the day of His mercy.
- 2. Tomorrow will be a different day.

C. He shall be able to stand who overcomes his sins.

- 1. There will be terrible events.
- 2. But he who is willing to give up all for the sake of God will stand.
- 3. God will be the only thing we can trust and plant our feet on.

Application questions.

1. Summarize the evidence for immediately going to heaven after death. In your opinion, what is the strongest case for believing it?

2. What are the common arguments of false teachers? What things should we be wary of?

3. In light of the wrath to come, how can you respond properly? What attitude should one have? What steps will you take to seriously address the sin in your own life?
