

# Job 38:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

## Analysis

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"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" God questions whether Job has accessed death's realm. The Hebrew sha'are mavet (שַׁעֲרֵי-מֵת, "gates of death") and sha'are tsalmavet (שַׁעֲרֵי-צַלְמָוֶת, "gates of the shadow of death") present death as a guarded domain. Only God possesses authority over death and Sheol. This anticipates Christ who holds "the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18) and conquered death through resurrection. Job cannot comprehend death's mysteries; God alone governs life and death.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern cultures conceived death as a realm with gates and guardians. Mesopotamian descent myths featured gates of the underworld. Israel's understanding, while using similar imagery, affirmed that Yahweh alone controlled access to and exit from death. This distinguished biblical faith from pagan underworld mythology.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does Christ's resurrection victory over death's gates transform our relationship with mortality?
2. What fears about death does this passage address when we remember God's sovereignty over it?

## Interlinear Text

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been opened	<sup>H0</sup> H1540	Have the gates	of death	Have the gates	of the shadow of death
		H8179	H4194	H8179	H6757
תְּרַא אֶת־					
unto thee or hast thou seen					H7200

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 9:13** (Parallel theme): Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

**Psalms 107:18** (Parallel theme): Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

**Job 3:5** (Parallel theme): Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.