

What Is Hades?

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The word *hades* means "unseen" and refers to the abode of the dead. It means "the realm of disembodied spirits," or the "unseen world." There is no inherent idea of punishment in this term itself, even though the wicked are tormented in *hades* (Luke 16:22-24). It describes the realm where all the spirits abide between death and the resurrection. The word is translated in the King James Version by the word *hell* (Luke 16:23; Acts 2:27), which may not be clear in our present day use of the word. As we use the word it usually connotes the eternal abode of the wicked after the judgment.

To properly understand the term *hades*, it must be observed that there are three entirely different states of the human spirit distinct from each other:

- The first is union with a physical body. This state is life on earth which terminates in physical death.
- The second state is that in which the human spirit is separated from its physical body. This begins at death and ends with the resurrection of the body. Hades is emptied of all its inhabitants at the resurrection (Revelation 20:13).
- The third state commences with the reunion of the spirit and the resurrected spiritual body, and continues forever (1 Corinthians 15:44). Hades will be destroyed when the third state begins (Revelation 20:14). Christ now has power over death and *hades* and will abolish them at his second coming (Revelation 1:18).

The Spirit of Christ Went to Hades

When Jesus died he went to *hell* (*hades*) (Acts 2:27,31). Are we to suppose that Jesus was tormented in *hades*? Certainly not! He told the thief, with whom he was crucified, that he was going to "paradise," which is a transliterated word meaning "a garden," or "a place of pleasure or comfort" (Luke 23:43).

When Christ went to *hades* (Acts 2:27), he also went into the hands of God, who is in heaven. Just after telling the thief that he would be with him in paradise that day, he said to his Father, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and he died (Luke 23:46). His spirit went to paradise in *hades* (Luke 23:43), but he did not go to heaven that day (John 20:14).

Jesus said, ". . . upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This is *hades*, the unseen realm. Peter quotes the prophecy of David concerning the resurrection of Christ that his soul was not left in hell (*hades*), nor was his body left in the grave (Acts 2:27 KJV).

"Gehenna"

The Greek word "gehenna" is translated "hell" in the KJV and refers to the place of eternal punishment. It is described as the "lake that burns with fire and brimstone" and "the second death" (Matthew 10:28; 25:41; Mark 9:43,48; Revelation 20:10,14-15). This word always refers to eternal punishment. It is not the place where Jesus went at his death (Acts 2:27). The KJV uses the English

hell to translate both "gehenna" and "hades." The ASV makes a difference in translating the two words, as "hell" and "hades."

"Tartarus"

The Greek word "tartarus" is also translated "hell" in the KJV. It means a place of punishment (2 Peter 2:4), and refers to that part of hades where the wicked are held in the intermediate state.

Two Places in Hades

Jesus revealed some facts about the unseen abode of the spirits of the dead in Luke 16:19-31. To call this a parable does not destroy the truth Jesus taught. It teaches that the spirit survives the body and is conscious in hades. He describes two men who died. One was named Lazarus and the other was simply called a rich man. Jesus said Lazarus died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Nothing is said about his body, but it is certain that somewhere it was buried and began to return to the dust from which it came. His spirit went to hades. The rich man also died. His body is said to have been buried; it went to the grave. His spirit also went to hades, and he found himself in torments. Both of these men were in hades, but they were in different states, described by different terms; there was a "great gulf fixed" so that one could not go from one place to the other. The place in hades where Lazarus was is called "Abraham's bosom," a place of comfort. The place in hades where the rich man was is called "tartarus," a place of torments (2 Peter 2:4). The rich man was not in the place of eternal punishment because the word used to describe that place is *gehenna*, the final abode of the unrighteous and workers of iniquity.

The righteous who die in the Lord are at rest (Revelation 14:13), and the wicked who die enter torment to await the resurrection from the dead and the judgment (Luke 16:19-31). When Christ comes again all the dead will be raised, some to the resurrection of damnation and some to the resurrection of life (John 5:28-29). After the judgment, which immediately follows the resurrection at the last day, the wicked will be cast into *gehenna*, which is the final punishment. This punishment is *outer darkness*, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30), the everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9), hell fire which is never quenched (Mark 9:44-45), and the place of torment with fire and brimstone (Revelation 14:10-11).

Guy N. Woods said in his booklet, *Where Are the Dead?* (pages 14,15), that an ingenious theory was developed by brother F. G. Allen in "Old Path Guide," and later in his sermon on *The State of the Dead*, in the *Old Path Pulpit* in which he advanced the idea that at the cross Christ abolished the compartment in hades designated "Abraham's bosom," and moved it to heaven. From that time all the faithful pass immediately into heaven at death. Others have argued that the intermediate state was abolished and the righteous go directly to heaven and the wicked go to the final and eternal "gehenna." But this theory is proved wrong by Peter's statement on the day of Pentecost, just ten days after the ascension of Christ to heaven. In showing the fulfillment of David's prophecy of the resurrection of Christ, he said: "For David is not ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:34). Neither the body nor spirit of David had ascended into the heavens at the time Peter spoke by the Holy Spirit, and that was AFTER the cross and the ascension of Christ into heaven.

This theory reduces the judgment of God to a needless event. If all now go to their eternal abode at death, why would they have to be brought out of heaven and gehenna in the resurrection to be judged and then returned back to the place from which they were taken? The day of judgment is a day when the dead must give an account of their lives, and it is a day when the Lord sentences all to their eternal destiny in their resurrected bodies (Matthew 25:31-46).

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