

HADES: THE UNSEEN WORLD

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James 2:26 says, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Therefore, at death the spirit is separated from the physical body. The spirit then goes to a place referred to in scripture as Hades. Hades literally means the *unseen* world. Everyone who has left this world is now there. Hades is a temporary place for the spirits of men while they await the coming of Judgment Day. At the end of the world, Hades will give up all the dead and be destroyed (Rev 20:13-14 where the Greek word *haidēs* is translated “hell”). The two permanent (eternal) places are heaven and hell, which is where men will go after Judgment Day. *Gehenna* is Greek word for actual “hell,” the lake of fire where the wicked will spend eternity (see Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; Jas 3:6). Before Judgment Day, all the dead go to Hades.

Paradise

“Hades” is a general term which describes the entire place where men go after death. There are two major parts of Hades. One side is Paradise, and the other is a place of torment. The former is where the righteous go, and the latter is where the wicked go. Psalm 16:10 prophesied of Christ, “*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*” Here, the Hebrew word translated “hell” is *Sheol*. This verse is quoted in Acts 2:27 and 31, where it is translated “Hades.” Obviously, Jesus did not go to *hell* (Gehenna). Rather, like all the dead, Jesus went to Hades when he died, although for only three days. Luke 23:43 says that Jesus went to Paradise. Therefore, Paradise is a part of Hades. Paradise is a place of comfort where the righteous go when they die (Luke 16:19-31). The beggar Lazarus was carried to Paradise by the angels of God. Abraham is there comforting the righteous. The repentant thief also went to Paradise to be with Jesus (Luke 23:43). Words are being spoken there which cannot be uttered on this earth (2 Cor 12:4). God’s “tree of life” is in the midst of Paradise (Rev 2:7). The righteous cannot leave there until the end of the world. They cannot cross the gulf over to the torment side and they cannot return to this world. At the end of the world, the resurrection of life, Judgment Day and heaven await the righteous.

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(continued)

The place of torment

The other side of Hades is the place of torment. The rich man died and went to Hades (again translated “hell,” but is not *Gehenna*). However, he went to a place of torment instead of Paradise (Luke 16:23). The place of torment is where the wicked go when they die. There are no angels carrying the wicked to this place, and no comfort in Abraham's bosom. There is a flame (Luke 16:24) that torments the wicked without relief. The wicked cry for mercy there, for even a drop of water to cool their tongue (Luke 16:24). Nobody on that side wants anyone they love to come there. There is a great gulf which separates the two sides of Hades and Paradise is “afar off” from the place of torment. Hades clearly includes both sides of the gulf, because Jesus and the rich man both went to Hades. They did not go to the same part of Hades: Jesus went to Paradise, the rich man to torment. The wicked cannot leave the place of torment until the end of the world. At the end of the world, the resurrection of damnation, Judgment Day and hell await the wicked. Whatever side of Hades a man goes to tells him where he will spend eternity: either heaven or hell. There won't be “suspense” on Judgment Day as to where we will be going afterwards. According to Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, “The dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done *under the sun*.” The dead have no knowledge or portion of anything that is “under the sun.” That is, the dead have no knowledge of what is done on the earth, and they have no more portion of any thing (good or bad) of what is done on the earth. This passage (and also Psa 6:5; 30:9; 88:3-5,10-12; Isa 38:18-19) does not teach that the dead are unconscious or without *any* knowledge or unable to do *anything*. Its context is the dead in relation to this world. The context of Luke 16:19-31 is the dead in relation to the next world and clearly teaches that the dead are very “awake,” conscious, alert and very aware and have knowledge of their circumstances in Hades. And that is where they will remain until they are cast into the lake of fire after Judgment Day (Rev 20:12-15).