

DEATH, HELL, AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

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"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" - Revelation 20:14.

Some people carelessly confound these two places, as if they were the same. This statement alone proves them to be two distinct localities, though of a similar character. Other citations confirm these facts. Hell is not simply a painful state. It is a certain clearly defined locality. We will consider these two places separately, then their relation to each other.

The word "hell" occurs twenty-three times in the New Testament, translated from three Greek words: "gehenna" twelve times, "hades" ten times, and "tartaroo" once (Jude 7). Jesus Christ used the word "hades" four times. It means a place that is down .. "Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell (hades)" - Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15. Its gates oppose the Church. Its inhabitants would pull saved folk into its realm, if possible; but "the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against" the Church which Jesus builds. Unsound teaching would send weak Christians into hades, if that were possible. Hades is a place of heat and pain. "In hell (hades) he (the rich man) lift up his eyes, being in torments (pain)." He prayed when it was too late - "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented (pained) in this flame" - Luke 16:23, 24. This is an unmistakably plain description of the state of the wicked in hell, from the beginning of time until the end of the Millennium. The rich man had no physical tongue then, neither did Lazarus have a physical finger. The guilty man's soul was suffering from a flame of regret and remorse. It was mental anguish, a burning conscience. His sight of Lazarus aggravated the pain. Observe that he did not repent. He was interested in his brethren's welfare; and their presence with him would increase his torment, because he had not witnessed to them and sought the Lord for them when he was alive on earth. But that was not the lake of fire. That was only "hades," not "ghenna." The adjective "everlasting" never occurs in connection with hades. The phrase "everlasting hell" is not Scriptural.

A DIFFERENT COMPARTMENT

"Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades), neither wilt Thou suffer (leave) Thine Holy One to see corruption" - Acts 2:26, 27. These words are quoted almost verbatim from Psalm 16:9, 10. The Greek word "hades" in the New Testament answers to the Hebrew word "sheol" in the Old Testament. It means invariably the habitation of the souls of the dead. It never means the grave, though it is thus translated in thirty-one instances. Note the differences between this person in hades and the rich man. Lazarus suffers no pain, no regret, no remorse, no despair. Instead, he is glad and rejoices, because he has ground for hope. David experienced all that, for through faith's telescope he saw that his Lord and Redeemer would go that way. However long his soul might be in "sheol" and his body in the grave (queber, Hebrew), some day he would be released from both. Jesus named that place in hades, "Abraham's bosom," which means nearness and

intimate fellowship. Jesus "in the bosom of the Father" has the same meaning - John 1:18.

"Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" - Luke 16:26. So sheol, or hades, comprised two distinct and separate compartments. The inhabitants could communicate, but could not change places with one another. Two citations at least in the Old Testament confirm this view. "For a fire (not a literal material fire) is kindled in Mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell (sheol)" - Deut. 32:22. God' s anger is not mentioned with reference to the righteous dead. "For great is Thy mercy toward me: and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell (sheol)" - Psalm 86:13. David knew that his soul would never be in the lowest hell. Jesus "descended first into the lower parts of the earth"; but not into the lowest parts, or lowest hades - Eph. 4:9. Those "spirits in prison," to whom Jesus preached, were in upper hades - the lower parts of the earth, as compared with the grave - I Peter 3:19. "The deep," also, evidently means upper hades - Romans 10:7. The Lord Jesus named upper hades or Abraham' s bosom, "Paradise"; that is, a park. He said to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" - Luke 23:43. The spirits of both Jesus and the thief went down into upper hades. That is not a question, but a declaration. The phrase, "shalt be," is one word in Greek. Bear in mind, that Jesus never went by His spirit into lowest hades. He could not contradict Abraham' s words, which He quoted. "They which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" - Luke 16:26. He never crossed the great gulf into lowest hades.

We must conclude from the above Scriptures that hades is a place of conscious existence. See also Isaiah 14:9-11. They that deny it, explain away Luke 16:19-31, saying that it is a parable. Lazarus and Abraham are mentioned, but names are not given in parables. If that is a parable, is not Psalm 16:9, 10 also a parable? Then is not Acts 2:25-32 a parable? Nay. Peter declares boldly, "He (David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell (hades), neither His flesh did see corruption (in the grave). This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" - Acts 2:31, 32. Russellism (Jehovah Witnesses) denies Christ' s resurrection. It says, "His human body may be somewhere, kept as a grand memorial, having been super- naturally removed." What blatant infidelity. It is plain where Russell went. "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." But God be praised eternally - "Now IS Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" - I Corinthians 15:16, 17, 20. The Truth gives us undisturbed rest, and thrills us with unspeakable joy, and fills us with an undying hope of seeing Jesus in His glorified body and of being with Him forever.

WHERE ARE THE DEAD TODAY?

Abraham, Lazarus, and the thief are not in hades today. Upper hades has been vacated. Lowest sheol, or hades, is still occupied by the wicked dead; and it will be so until the end of the Millennial reign of Christ. John wrote as if His reign were accomplished. He said, "But the rest of the dead (the wicked) lived not again until the thousand years were finished. And death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" - Rev. 20:5, 13. Jesus Christ' s body was in the grave three days only. His soul and spirit were in "the lower (not in the lowest) parts of the earth" for three days only - Eph. 4:9. Noah preached the Gospel for one hundred

and twenty years while building the ark. Only his family believed unto salvation. When the multitudes saw that they would be drowned as he had warned, many of them repented and accepted his message and were saved from their sins; but they were not saved from drowning. Peter says that they "some- time were disobedient"; namely, before they repented - I Peter 3:20. They were in prison in upper hades. They were not in torment in a flame like the rich man. They did not ask Abraham to cool their tongues. But they were conscious, for Jesus preached unto them. What was His theme? We conjecture wisely that He announced to them that He was the Redeemer whom Noah proclaimed; and that He bore their sins on a Cross, and would presently be raised up to save all that should believe on Him. Doubtless, He promised also to take them out of that prison. Paul tells us what happened next.

"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive (led a multitude of captives or prisoners), and gave gifts unto men." We would not understand this verse were it not for the apostle' s parenthetical words. Mark God' s parentheses - "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts (Paradise, Abraham' s bosom, the deep) of the earth?" - Eph. 4:8, 9. Peter has told us what Jesus did in that lower region. We infer reasonably that by leading a multitude of captives Jesus opened the gates of upper hades and caught away all its prisoners, from Adam and Eve until that hour, and took them to Heaven with Him. Having that vast throng with Him augmented "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (in the heavenlies)" - Eph. 1:19, 20. There is an innumerable host of saved spirits in Heaven awaiting the resurrection of their bodies, including the antediluvian believers and the saved Israelites. The same Paul exclaimed, "I knew a man in Christ ... caught up to the third Heaven ... caught up into Paradise" - II Cor. 12:2, 4. Before Jesus died, Paradise was down below. Now Paul locates it up in "the third Heaven." John also locates it on high - Rev. 2:7; 22:2. Our text implies the same truth. Hell (hades) will come to an end. Meanwhile, until the Lord comes, the home of departed believers is in Heaven - the Paradise on high. The apostle says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" - II Cor. 5:8. Study the context. Also he wrote, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" - Phil. 1:23. Then he fills us with thrilling hope, by informing us of the resurrection and translation of the saints, in I Thessa- lonians four and I Corinthians fifteen. Jesus had said, "Occupy till I come" - Luke 19:13.

THE LAKE OF FIRE

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" - Revelation 20:14. Let us consider the second part of our text. It declares two facts; namely, that the first has an end, and the second absorbs the first. We saw that the Greek word "hades" was translated "hell" ten times in the New Testament. Now we shall see that another Greek word, "gehenna," is translated "hell" twelve times. Hell (hades) has been likened to a jail, a temporary prison; and the lake of fire to a penitentiary, a lifelong prison. Jesus Christ used the word "gehenna" (hell) to express the punishment everlasting of unbelievers. Various descriptive terms are stated by Scripture citations. Gehenna is a place of fire, even "fire that never shall be quenched" - Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 18:8, 9; Mark 9:43, 45. Only soul

and spirit go into hades. But the whole man goes into gehenna, which shows that gehenna was our Lord's way of expressing the lake of fire - Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5. James says, "It (the tongue) is set on fire of hell (gehenna) - James 3:6. Jesus said to the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, "How can ye escape the damnation (judgment) of hell (gehenna)" - Matthew 23:33.

Note other statements of the nature of the lake of fire. Jesus warned His hearers of "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" and of "everlasting punishment" - Matthew 25:41, 46. They that offend and do iniquity shall be cast "into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" - Matthew 13:42, 50. Paul gave warning of flaming fire, everlasting punishment, damnation, "destruction and perdition" - II Thess. 1:9; 2:12; I Timothy 6:9. Jesus called Judas Iscariot "the son of perdition" - John 17:12. Peter speaks of "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" - II Peter 3:7. "Perdition" means "the lake of fire." See Revelation 17:8. "Gehenna" is the Hebrew word for the Greek "gehenna." It was "the valley of Hinnom," where the dead bodies of the worst criminals were destroyed by fire. Worms infested those corpses continually. Our Lord used that burning valley as a fiery figure of the lake of unquenchable fire" - Mark 9:43, 45, 47, 48. "The bottomless pit" is another term for lower hades. The Revised Version says "the abyss." We read of "the abyss" in Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7. That region was "hades," upper and lower; though Romans 10:7 refers to upper hades only. Satan will be cast into the pit of the abyss when Jesus begins His Millennial reign. The references in revelation 9:1; 11:7; 17:8 and 20:1-3 to that place imply that the upper part will have been vacated, as taught by Ephesians 4:8. Satan will be in that prison for a thousand years, then be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" - Rev. 20:7, 10. That will be the "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" - Matthew 25:41. Fallen angels are even now in that prison "reserved in everlasting (perpetual, aidiois, Greek) chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" - Jude 6. Then they, too, will be cast into the lake of fire.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

Our Lord counted the wickedness of the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees so heinous that He pointed out their final doom first. He passed over their temporary imprisonment in hell (hades) - Matthew 5:22, 29, 30. John learned the truth about the destiny of unbelievers from the Lord. The last four chapters, of the revelation made to him, furnish unanswerable proof that their punishment will have no end. The battle of Armageddon will end with the beast or anti-Christ, and the false prophet, cast alive into the lake of fire; and the remnant of the enemies of Christ slain by His mighty Word - Rev. 19:19-21. Again we say that only the souls and spirits of men inhabit hell (hades), also fallen angels and demons; but men will dwell in the lake of fire in their bodies.

After one thousand years in prison in the pit of the abyss (lower hades), Satan will be hurled into the lake of fire to keep company with the beast and false prophet - "and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (into the ages of the ages)" - Rev. 20:10. John says, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it (dead bodies raised to life); and death and hell

(hades) delivered up the dead which were in them (that is, the bodies in graves and the souls in hades came forth for judgment): and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Note that there will be no more death nor hell after that, for "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" - Rev. 20:12-15.

Death is separation. Men are dead in trespasses and sins, separated from God and light. The first death implied here is separation of the soul from the body, and the temporary abode is in hades. The second death is the lake of fire. Death is an enemy to Christ and His people. Hence, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The Christian shouts, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades), where is thy victory?" - I Cor. 15:26, 54, 55. Jesus said, "If any man eat of this Bread (Himself), he shall live for ever" - John 6:51, 58. He said to weeping Martha, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" - John 11:26. "On such the second death hath no power" - Rev. 20:6. They will never be separated from God. Physical death to believers is not real death; it is a divinely protected sleep. Jesus said, "Lazarus sleepeth." "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" - I Thess. 4:14. The Lord said, "Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" - Revelation 21:5,7.

Now mark the dismal eternal contrast. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" - Rev. 21:8. That state is "forever and ever," or into the ages of the ages (eis tous aionas ton aionon, Greek). Stop and think. Ask yourself these questions: What ages and how many will follow the Millennial period? How long will each one continue? Can we wonder why they are translated, "forever and ever?"

The devil is deceiving people continually and tripping them, by leading them to wrest the Scriptures from their contexts and thus giving wrong interpretations. Satan uses human reasonings to hurl men into gross errors. They deny and try to overthrow the final chapters of Revelation. Some teach that the wicked will be annihilated or burnt up literally. Destruction does not necessarily mean annihilation or utter extinction. The earth was destroyed by a flood, but it still exists. The final fire of Divine judgment in perdition will not be physical. Like the rich man in hell, men will suffer the pangs of remorse and regret, shut out from God's Presence with not the slightest hope of deliverance. "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, neither in this world (age), nor in that which is to come" - Matthew 12:32 R. V. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever (into the ages of ages, Greek)" - Rev. 14:11. Material fire would consume the bodies into ashes. The soul anguish of the rich man in hades is an earnest of the torments of the lost in the lake of fire.

Erroists make a great ado over the Hebrew word "olam" or "alam," and the Greek word "aion" and "aionios." They try to prove universal salvation by these words. It is true that "olam" and "aion" mean a space of time, a period, an age, a very long period, a period out of mind; that is, an age beyond human conception. The Greek "aionios" literally means

"age-lasting," or "age-continuing." But, instead of these meanings contradicting our King James translation, they confirm it and make the facts plainer and more positive. Turn to some sample citations in your Bible and compare them with the original. The context determines the length of the period mentioned. "Have not forgiveness, neither in this age (the Church period), not in the coming one (the Millennium)" - Matthew 12:32. "In the world (age) to come life everlasting (life age-lasting)" - Luke 18:30. Compare Hebrews 9:12. Jesus was addressing Israel. "God ... hath given us (Christians) everlasting (age-lasting) consolation" - II Thess. 2:16. "Unto all the generations of the age of the ages" - Eph. 3:21 R. V. These may refer to the Millennium. But Ephesians 2:7 reaches beyond that period - "That in the ages to come (Millennial and succeeding periods) He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

The Scriptures speak of past eternity and of future eternity. "The revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal" means the dispensations from Adam to Christ - Romans 16:25 R. V. "Before the world began (the ages of time)" - II Timothy 1:9. This takes us back beyond Ephesians 1:4 - "Chosen us in Him before the foundation (or re-creation) of the world" - Genesis 1. Observe the phrase "life age-lasting" (or eternal) in such citations as John 3:15, 16, 36 and 5:24, where the age length is proven to be without end by the attendant words "should not perish." John 10:28 reads, "In no wise shall they perish for the age," which must be eternal. In John 6:40, 47, 54, 68 we have the assurance of "age-lasting life," by the fourth time utterance, "I will raise him up at the last day." Twice it is written, "He shall live for the age" (or, forever) - John 6:51, 58. Jesus said also, "He that eateth Me (believeth), even he shall live by Me"; and "because I live, ye shall live also" - John 6:57; 14:19. How long has He been living? How long will He live? As long as John wrote that the wicked would be punished - "unto ages of ages," and "unto the ages of the ages" - Rev. 14:10, 11; 20:10 R. V. Just so long we will praise Him - "To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore (unto all the ages). Amen!" - Jude 25 Revised Version.

People who are acquainted with the Bible and deny the eternal punishment of the wicked are not honest. If they mean what they say, then they are virtually saying that God and Jesus and saved folk also may have an end. If Divine judgment of the wicked is not forever, then bliss and salvation are not forever, for the same duration terms are used of both. If Jesus Christ is the life that we receive in the new birth, and He is eternal, then every one who believes on Jesus has eternal life. On the other hand, that human logic which provides salvation for the lost by means of suffering in judgment flames must save the devil also, for he is God's creature. Men sweep away the repeated utterances of God's just wrath, saying that He is too merciful. But true believers agree with God and cry out, saying, "For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest" - Revelation 6:17; 15:3, 4.

