

THE PLACE OF THE DEAD

Death, Hell, Sheol, and Hades – Where do the dead go?

I. A quick (and cursory) review of the original languages

- A. In the Old Testament the most common word for the place of the dead is sheol (translated as: grave, hell, pit).
- B. In the New Testament the most common word for the place of the dead is hades (translated as: grave, hell).
- C. These two words (in the two languages) refer to the same place: “hell.”
 - 1. (Acts 2.27, 31) In context, Peter is speaking of Jesus Christ: Acts 2.25-31.
 - a) After His death and before His resurrection, Christ went to “hell” (Greek: hades).
 - b) Note: Acts 2.27 is a quote from Psalm 16.10
 - 2. (Ps 16.10) Here the same English word (hell) is a translation of the Hebrew word sheol.
 - 3. And this is how we know that both words (sheol and hades) refer to the same place. Acts 2.27 quotes Psalm 16.10, and God used the word hades as a Greek equivalent to the Hebrew sheol.
- D. Conclusion: Sheol (Hebrew), hades (Greek), and hell (English) refer to the same place.

II. Hell (sheol/hades) has two sections (two compartments or areas): Luke 16.19-31.

- A. (v22) Lazarus died and went to a place called Abraham's Bosom.
- B. (v22) The rich man died and went to “hell” (hades).
- C. (v23-24) The rich man was close enough to see Abraham and Lazarus, and he was close enough to also speak with Abraham.
- D. (v25) The place where Lazarus was (Abraham's Bosom) was a place of rest and comfort. The place where the rich man was, was a place of torment in flames.
- E. These are the two sections (compartments, areas) of hell (sheol/hades).
 - 1. Abraham's Bosom: Paradise (a place of rest and comfort).
 - 2. The Inferno (for lack of a better term): Conscious torment in flames.

III. Sheol (hell, the grave, the place of the dead in the Old Testament) is in the heart of the earth.

- A. (Gen 37.35) The dead go “down” into the grave (sheol).
- B. (Num 16.30-33) The earth opened up and swallow up the rebels alive into the pit (sheol).
- C. (Jonah 2.2-6) Hell (sheol; v2) is at the bottoms of the mountains (under the mountains; v6).

IV. In the Old Testament, all the dead (saints and wicked) went to hell (sheol, hades).

- A. Note: The problem with this statement is not with the Bible's use of the word “hell” to refer to the place where Paradise was (Abraham's Bosom). The problem is with our unbiblical use of the term “hell,” using it exclusively to refer to the place of torment in flames.
- B. The dead *saints* went to hell (sheol), called later in the New Testament “Abraham's Bosom” (e.g., Luke 16.19-31).
- C. The *wicked* dead went to hell (sheol), also, but they went to the “inferno,” the area of conscious torment in flames.

V. Christ went to hell (sheol/hades) for three days and three nights after His death on the cross.

- A. (Ps 16.10 cf. Acts 2.27-31) Christ went to hell—to sheol (Ps 16.10), to hades (Acts 2.27-31).
- B. (Mat 12.40 cf. Jon 2.2-6) Christ went to the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.
- C. (John 19.30) “It is finished”: Christ did not go to the place of conscious torment in flames to suffer. He suffered all the wrath of God the Father for all sin, all sins, and all sinners when He was on the cross. And when He died, He had finished the atonement (there was nothing more to pay/suffer).
 - 1. (Luke 23.39-43) When Christ died He went to Paradise.
 - 2. After His death on the cross, Christ went to Paradise in the heart of the earth (the Paradise side of “hell”—of sheol/hades). He went to Abraham's Bosom where the Old Testament saints were kept until the atonement of the cross.
- D. (1Pet 3.18-22 cf 2Pet 2.4; Jude 6) Just as Abraham (from Paradise) spoke to the rich man in the flames, so Christ preached His victory to the demons who sinned before the flood. Jesus was in Abraham's Bosom (the Paradise side of hell/sheol/hades) and the demons were in chains of darkness.

VI. After three days and three nights in Paradise (Abraham's Bosom), in the heart of the earth, Christ rose from the dead, took all the Old Testament saints out of Abraham's Bosom, and took them to heaven (into the presence of God the Father).

- A. (Exod 34.6-7) The Old Testament animal sacrifices could not clear the guilty.
- B. (Heb 10.1-4) The animal sacrifices only “covered” sins until Christ's ultimate and final sacrifice atoned for them completely.
- C. (Heb 9.11-12) With Christ's sacrifice, there is now eternal redemption (something that did not exist before His work on the cross).
- D. Therefore, until the resurrection, God made a “waiting room” for His saints—a place of comfort and rest: Paradise, Abraham's Bosom (a part of what the Bible refers to as hell, sheol, or hades).
 - 1. The saints were still separated from God by sin until Christ paid the price for their sins.
 - 2. But, they were saved so they did not go to the flames. They went to Paradise (but not to heaven).
- E. (Ps 49.15) The hope of the Old Testament saint was the redemption of his soul from the grave (sheol, hades), from being held “captive” in Abraham's Bosom (“captive” because his sins still separated him from God).
- F. (Eph 4.8-10) Christ paid the price for the final and complete redemption of sinners when He died on the cross, and then three days later He took all the “captives” of Abraham's Bosom free. He took them from the heart of the earth and brought them into the third heaven, the presence of God (because their sin debt—the penalty for the sins—had been paid in full).
- G. (Mat 27.52) A few of the Old Testament saints were allowed to go into Jerusalem as a sign to Israel.

VII. Today, Abraham's Bosom is “closed” and Paradise is in the third heaven (God's presence).

- A. (Mat 12.40 cf. Luke 23.43) Paradise was in the heart of the earth.
- B. (2Cor 12.1-4) Paradise is now in the third heaven, in the presence of God (Christ moved it there when He rose from the dead; Eph 4.8-10).
- C. When a saint dies today, he goes straight to “heaven” (the third heaven, the presence of God).
 - 1. (2Cor 5.8) To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.
 - 2. (Phil 1.23) To depart from this world is to be with Christ.
 - 3. (1Thes 4.14) This is why, when Christ returns from heaven to rapture the Church, He brings the dead Christians with Him. A saint today dies, he goes to heaven to be with the Lord, and the Lord will bring him back (his soul) in the rapture, and he will meet his new body in the air.

Death & Hell (Sheol / Hades)

