

Series: The Glory of God in the Person of Christ #1260

Title: Hades or Heaven?

Revelation 1.18

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. When we left off yesterday we were at a critical juncture in our ongoing discussion of Revelation chapter 1, and verse 18. Here, the Lord Jesus is communicating who He is to His willing bondservant John. And Jesus tells John, (quote), **“I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”** And we are bearing down now on the fact that Christ holds keys to what He calls death and of Hades. The key term here is Hades, and I have encouraged you to highlight that in your own copy of the New Testament. I trust you have done that. And last time I said the following about Hades. I think we can all use a brief reminder. And I want to make certain you understand this, so please pay close attention.

The first truth I want to give you about Hades is this: Hades is a real, existing place. Hades is a location. Hades is a destination. It is a place of *death*. Please notice in this verse Jesus reveals to John, **“...of death and of Hades.”** Jesus states it this way because some dead people are currently in Hades and some people, while still living in this life, are headed to Hades when they die. So, in your mind you must relate death to Hades.

And given Hades is a location, then we can ask, where is it located? And the answer is two-fold: first, only God knows. Second, Hades is not located on earth. No. Hades is a place – beyond this physical universe – that one transitions to *following physical death*, such that in the millisecond of death, the physical body goes into the grave (or is cremated, whatever the case may be), but the soul transitions to Hades. Physical death is the condition that transports the soul of a certain person to this destination called Hades, of which Christ speaks.

And as we did yesterday, we must always stop to ask a question of monumental significance: who are these certain persons whose souls go to Hades when they die? Which ones among us are going to Hades upon physical, bodily death? Biblical answer: this “certain person” of whom I speak is someone who is *not* a Christian. These are people, tragically, who reject Jesus Christ as the Only Savior from sin and therefore *the* way to God. These are persons for whom their sins are not forgiven, because of their rejection of Christ as their Savior (their *only* deliverer from sin).

Does this describe you? Or, is this descriptive of someone you care about? We know for certain that the countless number of people you and I interact with on a daily basis have no such faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Just thinking about the numbers is deeply disturbing, or at least it *must* move us! If you’re a genuine believer and you are not struck *at an emotional level* within your person at all of the people you know, or you somehow engage with on a daily basis who are not in Christ, and therefore going to Hades when they die, then (well my friend) you do not understand the terror of Hades. And that’s why I want to explain what happens to the soul that ends up there.

I invite you to be with me today and on Monday so that you hear the truth from God’s voice to your ears, through the Bible, and my sincere prayer for you is that you will believe what you hear and take swift action to cry out to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to rescue you and redeem you from evil, and the sin that has ensnared and captured you, keeping you from fellowship with the living God. Stick with me, please. These are important days together.

Let me explain the difference between someone whose soul goes to Hades at death versus someone whose soul goes to heaven at death. Or, what is the difference between what transpires at death for the person who is *not* a genuine Christian versus the person who *is* a genuine Christian. I’ll start with a person who is *not* a genuine Christian. As I’ve said, at the point of physical death the body remains on earth (either in a grave, or as many people request today, the body is cremated). But the soul of no person *ever* dies. And so that soul, for someone who is not a Christian, goes to Hades. And this is a temporary or intermediate place where that person’s soul is tormented before ultimately going to hell. More on that soon.

Whereas, the person who is a genuine Christian, that is one who has assurance of salvation from sin by the testimony of the Holy Spirit living within us, also encounters a physical death. Right? Christians die. You and I both have attended the funerals of believers. And the milisecond that follower of Jesus dies, that person's soul goes immediately into the presence of the Lord in heaven. This heaven is also a temporary or intermediate place where that person's soul enjoys the perfect peace and loving presence of Christ before ultimately going to the new heaven described in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

And let me get a Scripture on your mind to prove that what I have just said is *true*. These are definitely not my ideas, this is *God's* truth! The Bible passage I have in mind will tell us about both temporary or intermediate places: Hades and heaven. This is in Luke's Gospel, chapter 16, verses 19-31. I will read this for us now and comment on it again on Monday. Luke 16, verses 19-31.

"¹⁹ Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. ²⁰ And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, ²¹ and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. ²² Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ And [the rich man] cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

²⁷ And he said, "Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' ³¹ But [Abraham] said to [the rich man], 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Now that is stunning and it is God's report of what happens to the dead in Luke 16. From the words of Jesus, let me prove my earlier points. First, the person who is not a Christian – their soul goes to Hades when they die. That is exactly what happened to the rich man in this story. The rich man (verses 22 and 23) **"also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom."** Where is the rich man? He is in Hades. This is the same Hades Jesus spoke to John about in Revelation 1.18. And notice that he experiences (verse 23) **"torment."** That is the first thing I want you to notice, in keeping with my first point. Hades is a real place and people who are not Christians die and go there, in torment.

Now, second previously, I told you that the person who *is* a Christian – their soul goes to heaven when they die. That is exactly what happened to the poor man named Lazarus in this story. In Luke chapter 16 and verse 22 Jesus says, **"²² Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom..."** And Abraham's bosom is a Jewish way to describe where? Heaven! So Jesus is saying, Lazarus died and went to heaven. That is the second thing I want you to notice, in keeping with my second point. Heaven is a real place and people who are in Christ die and go there. Where are *you* going when you die? It is to one of only two locations: to Hades *or* to heaven; ultimately to hell *or* to the new heaven!

And based on the description of what the rich man experiences in Hades and the poor man Lazarus experiences in heaven, you definitely want to go to heaven when you die. But, clearly, not everyone does. You must decide. Do you want to obediently follow Jesus to heaven or be disobedient to God and follow Satan to hell? Earlier I said I would tell you what Hades is like, and now here it is. I think this must serve as motivation for you to get right with God, through Jesus.

Notice in the text the rich man in Hades is **“in torment,”** he is **“in agony in this flame”** (verse 24), in verse 25 Abraham tells the poor man **“you are in agony”** and in verse 26 he is told that he cannot cross over from Hades to heaven (he is in Hades forever), and in verse 28 again the rich man calls Hades **“a place of torment.”** That is Hades. More on this on Monday on God Is.

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