

HADES: THE ABODE OF DISEMBODIED SOULS BEFORE AND AFTER JESUS CHRIST'S ASCENSION TO HEAVEN

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Some say that man is wholly mortal and at death ceases to exist; he is wholly annihilated ; he has no conscious existence. Thus there is no such thing as a separate existence of the soul from the body any place.
2. Some say that before the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ that at death the disembodied souls or men went to the place known as Hades, the abode of disembodied souls of both the place known as Hades, the abode of disembodied souls of both the righteous and the wicked.
3. Some say that after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven at the right hand of God, that at death the disembodied souls of the righteous go directly to heaven, but that the souls of the wicked go to Hades.
4. Others say that after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, he completely did away with or destroyed Hades, that it exists no more.
5. Others, of whom I am one, say that the hadean world existed before the ascension of Jesus Christ and still exists today, and that at death the disembodied souls of both the righteous and the wicked still go to Hades to await the resurrection of the body and the final judgment.
6. What we are saying is that there is for men a present state or condition of man's existence; there is an intermediate state of condition of man's existence for the disembodied soul, known as Hades ; and there is a final, future, eternal state for man's existence – that of either heaven or hell.
7. What does the Bible teach about the question of Hades both before and after the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven? Let us see!

II. DISCUSSION

A. HADES AS REVEALED AND DESCRIBED IN THE N.T.

1. The word Hades is translated from the Gr. HAIDES (), meaning “not to be seen;” “the unseen world;” “The common receptacle of disembodied spirits,” Thayer. It refers to the intermediate state of men

where the disembodied souls of men went to await the resurrection of the body and the final judgment.

2. In Lk.16:19-28 before the ascension of Christ, Hades existed.
 - a. It had two compartments – one of comfort, the other of torment or misery – with a great impassable gulf in between separating the two compartments.
 - b. At death the disembodied souls of both the righteous and the wicked were carried to Hades.
 - c. At death Lazarus, the righteous, “was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom,” that compartment in Hades known as a place of comfort, honor, Paradise, Lk.16:20-22.
 - d. Also at death the “rich man” (the unrighteous)...”in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment,” and made an urgent request, Lk.16:22-24.
 - e. The rich man’s request was denied with explanation declaring two reasons for the denial.
 - (1) His sinful life in the flesh and impenitence even unto death.
 - (2) The “great gulf fixed” between the two compartments in Hades, “so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence,” Lk.16:25,26.
 - f. The rich man made still another request involving his desire to keep other from coming where he was which was also denied with scriptural grounds offered, Lk.16:27-31.
3. In Ac.2:27-32 Hades is said to be the place where the soul of Jesus Christ was while his body was in the grave. Notice especially Vv.27,31.
 - a. See also the case of the thief on the cross with Jesus at the crucifixion and the promise Jesus made to the thief, Lk.23:43.
 - (1) Jesus promised that both He and the thief would be in “Paradise” that day.
 - (2) “Paradise” is here compared with Lk.16:22 and Lazarus being “carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.”
 - b. Jno.20:17 also teaches that Jesus Christ (that is, his soul) did not go to the Father (in heaven) while his body was in the grave, for on the day of the resurrection, he said to Mary, “Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”
 - (1) This is the case in spite of what is said in Lk.23:46: “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father,

into thy hands, I commend my spirit: and having said this he gave up the ghost.”

- (2) If Jesus went to Paradise (as he told the thief he would) and was also in Hades (as Peter says he was), it follows that before his ascension, Paradise was a compartment in Hades.
4. Surely, this proves that previous to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ Hades existed, had two compartments – one of comfort, honor, or Paradise, the other of misery or torment, with a great impassable gulf in between separating the two; and that Hades is neither heaven nor hell.
5. It also proves that the disembodied souls of the righteous went to the one; the wicked to the other – both to await the resurrection and the final judgment.

B. REFUTING THE ARGUMENTS OF THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT SINCE THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST THE SOULS OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS DO NOT GO TO PARADISE IN HADES, BUT RATHER GO DIRECTLY TO HEAVEN TO BE WITH THE LORD.

1. Some of these claim Eph.4:8 which says, “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men,” refers to his leading the righteous dead out of Hades, including those saints who had been raised from the dead around Jerusalem at the time of his resurrection” (Mt.27:50-53).
 - a. Thus they argue that Hades would have been emptied at this time of all of the righteous souls who were there, and subsequently, the souls of all future saints, at their death, would also be taken directly to heaven.
 - b. Not so! It doesn’t say that! Doesn’t teach that! The idea of Eph.4:8 is as follows:
 - (1) In ancient times conquering kings led their captives on parade before their loyal subjects.
 - (2) “Captivity” here refers to death (physical death) as death had held dominion over every living thing on earth since Adam’s sin, Adam’s offence (Rom.5:15,17,18), Adam’s disobedience (Rom.5:19). See 1Cor.15:21,22).
 - (3) Jesus went down into death’s inner prison, conquered death and hell, burst asunder the bars of death, rose triumphant over the power of death.

- (4) In his triumph he secured man's resurrection from the dead and won his crown of King of kings and Lord of lords, Jno.5:21,22,25-29; 1Cor.15:20-23,25,26; Ac.24:15.
 - (5) In his glorious ascension, conveyed by a host of angels, he led death a captive, a conquered captive.
 - (6) Since that day, death reigns not as an unconquered and independent sovereign, but by the permission of and subject to the will of its conqueror and captor – Jesus Christ (Mt.16:18; Ac.2:22-24; 2Tim.1:10; Heb.2:14-18).
2. Some claim at death the souls of the wicked, but only the souls of the wicked, still, even after the ascension of Jesus, are taken to torments in Hades, just like the rich man of Lk.16 to await the resurrection of the body and the final judgment.
- a. One answer to that is that Hades is not just one part of the realm of the dead – the disembodied souls –but both parts with a great impassable gulf in between as described in Lk.16:19-28.
 - b. Hades always refers to the whole realm, not to one part of it.
 - c. To try to justify this argument by saying, as some do, that: “The N.T. never speaks of any Christian as going to or being in Hades after death or coming from Hades.” Or, to say that: “All persons mentioned in the N.T. as still being in Hades after the resurrection and ascension of Christ are said to be ‘kept under punishment,’ awaiting the resurrection and the judgment when they will be cast into the lake of fire,” is to fail to consider, or to ignore, the resurrection and judgment passages, such as Jno.5:28,29; Mt.25:31-46.
 - (1) One simple answer to this is to keep this Biblical principle in mind: Once the N.T. establishes the purpose for something, it doesn't have to mention that purpose every time that subject or something relating to that subject is mentioned.
 - (2) Apply this principle to baptism and its purpose established in Ac.2:36-38.
 - (3) So. Once the Bible establishes what Hades is, who is going there, when and for how long, it does not need to repeat that every time the dead are mentioned, either the righteous or the wicked dead!
 - d. As further justification of this argument, some raise the question: “What does the N.T. reveal to us about the state of the dead after Jesus resurrection?” Then they make the following arguments:

(1) “2Pet.2:9 – The unjust dead are reserved under punishment awaiting the day of judgment; that is, they are being kept in the place of torments in Hades. They will be resurrected when Jesus comes again ‘to the resurrection of condemnation,’ Jno.5:28,29. They will be judged according to what they have done during their bodily existence, 2Cor.5:10.”

(a) Answer:

(1) 2Pet.2:9 addresses only the unrighteous; so let us not assume falsely concerning the righteous dead based on this passage. To do so would be like assuming falsely concerning the wicked dead based on 1Th.4:13-18; 1Cor.15:42-57 simply because the wicked dead are not referred to in those passages.

(2) Besides that, Jno.5:28,29 refers to **both** the righteous and the unrighteous, not just the unrighteous – one “unto the resurrection of life” ; the other, “unto the resurrection of damnation.”

(3) Moreover, 2Cor.5:10, Again, it’s “**all**”, not just the “unrighteous”.

(2) “Rev.6:9-11 and John’s vision of the souls of the martyrs who died under the Roman persecution...Does this describe Hades, or does it picture those saints martyred in the first century as being in heaven now?”

(a) Answer: This does not refer to heaven. Rev.2:4 pictures these martyred souls avenged by God, victorious over their enemies, raised to thrones, judgment given unto them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

(b) This is a figurative resurrection; the resurrection of a cause; their cause was victorious. Christ and his faithful saints had overcome the Dragon and the two beasts who operated by his authority (Rev.19,20). This is not souls in heaven with Christ.

(c) Furthermore, to reign with Christ does not mean to be in heaven with him. Cf. 2Tim.2:12.

(1) For according to 1Cor.15:24-26, he shall not reign beyond his 2nd Coming “when he

delivers up the kingdom to God, when he shall have abolished, defeated, made ineffective all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (physical death).”

(2) Those who suffer with him now (2Tim.2:12) reign with him now. Christians suffer with him now. Therefore Christians reign with him now

3. Furthermore, if the righteous souls are already in heaven have they not already received their eternal reward?
 - a. If not, why not? How can our souls be in heaven and not have eternal life with all that means?
 - b. If they can be in heaven without having their eternal reward, then what about all the passages that tell us it is a promise to be fulfilled at the resurrection and the final judgment and in the world to come? Mt.25:31-46; Mk.10:28-30; Jno.5:22,27-29; Rom.2:1-16; 2Cor.5:10; 2Tim.4:1; Heb.9:27,28.
 - c. Furthermore, from 1Pet.1:3-5,9 we learn that according to God’s abundant mercy:
 - (1) We are “begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ the dead,” V.3.
 - (2) “To an inheritance...reserved in heaven,” V.4.
 - (3) “Unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,” V.5.
 - (4) At which time we receive the end of our faith,” even the salvation (the eternal salvation) of your souls,” V.9. Cf. 2Pet.1:5-11.
 - d. According to this, the soul of the righteous does not go directly to heaven at death!
4. Some who hold that since the ascension of Jesus Christ the souls of the righteous go directly to heaven seek to justify their position on the basis of proof texts such as the following, which they claim mean that the faithful go directly to heaven when they die.
 - a. “Stephen’s statement in Ac.7:59 at the time of his death: ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”
 - b. “The two statements in 2Cor.5:6,8: (1) Physically alive – ‘at home in the body we are absent from the Lord’ (2) Dead – ‘absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.’”

- c. “Phil.1:21-24, Paul was ‘in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart (to die), and to be with Christ...’”
- d. “1Th.4:14, ‘For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.’”
 - (1) Simply means: “bring in connection with him”
- e. Consider the following as the answer to each of these verses as proof texts.
 - (1) Such or similar statements were made prior to the ascension of Christ and they did not mean that the righteous went directly to heaven. Why should they mean something different since his ascension? Eccl.12:7 (3:21); Lk.23:46; 1Pet.2:23. (Cf. Ac.2:27,31; Lk.23:43 – Point A. 3 of this study)
 - (2) Furthermore, if their proof texts prove their argument, then the Bible contradicts itself.
 - (a) Phil.3:20,21 says: “Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,” (v.20). Who when he comes “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...”(v.21).
 - (b) Then 1Jno.3:2 teaches that we will not see him as he is until the 2nd Coming!
 - (c) Ye if all the righteous go directly to heaven at death, they will have already seen him as he is!
 - (d) Who is right? John in 1Jno.3:2, or the people who argue to the contrary?

III. CONCLUSION

1. The position which says the souls of the righteous dead go directly to heaven rather than to Paradise in Hades in effect does away with and/or denies the final judgment of the righteous at the 2nd Coming of Christ at the resurrection of all men.
2. It seems somewhat ridiculous to say the souls of the righteous are in heaven either with or without their eternal reward, eternal life, eternal salvation, but they will be brought back for the resurrection and the final judgment and then go back to heaven.
3. Furthermore I find nothing in the N.T. to suggest such a thing will take place!