

What is hades, hell and heaven?

Many people are confused about the difference between "hades" and "hell." Some Bible translations make no distinction in the two words. What about "heaven?" What do you know about the place where the righteous will dwell? Let's take a serious look in the Bible to see if we can find the distinctions and answers to these places of reality.

I. IS THERE A DISTINCTION MADE BETWEEN "HADES" AND "HELL"?

A. Even though some Bible translations make no distinctions, the original writers of the Greek New Testament made distinctions between them using two different Greek words.

B. The two words: "Hades" and "Geenna" or "Gehenna".

II. WHAT ARE THE TWO WORDS FOR HADES AND HELL?

A. Hades.

(26) "Therefore My heart was glad and My tongue exulted; moreover My flesh also will live in hope; (27) because You will not abandon My soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

Acts 2:26-27

1. Peter is preaching to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and quotes from the Psalms to show David was speaking about Jesus.

2. At the death of Jesus, what happened to His soul (v.27)?

3. What happened to His body (v.27)?

"He looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay."

Acts 2:31

4. His soul was not abandoned to Hades and His flesh (body) did not remain long enough to decay.

5. Hades is a temporary holding place of the unrighteous souls. (We will look at this in detail.)

6. Was Jesus unrighteous? How can Peter, in *Acts 2:26-31*, say that Jesus' soul went to Hades if indeed Hades is a temporary holding place of the unrighteous?

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

II Corinthians 5:21

7. Jesus' life was sinless so "...He knew no sin."

8. Man is sinful and deserving the wrath of God.

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever done anything wrong? How are you going to correct that wrong you did, knowing that "...the wages of sin is death" (***Romans 6:23***)?

9. Therefore, God's righteousness demands the full payment for sin but His love made "...Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf."

10. Jesus had to suffer the full effects of the consequences of sin "...the we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (Bold is my emphasis.)

"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."

Acts 2:24

POINT: Death involves agony and separation from God. Death is a power. If Jesus is our substitute for our sins, He had to suffer death's full effects!

(10) "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (11) As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities."

Isaiah 53:10-11

B. Hell - Gehenna.

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Matthew 10:28

1. Gehenna is the place where the body and soul come together. It is a place where the destructive process continues forever!

2. The word "hell" in ***Matthew 10*** and, in some translations "hell" in ***Acts 2***, are not the same word in the Greek text.

II. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PLACES?

A. Hades - the temporary holding place of the unrighteous soul.

(23) "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) And he 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 to cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'"

Luke 16:23-24

1. What does Jesus say Hades is (v.23)?

2. Hades is a place of torment and agony.

"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.'"

Luke 16:25

3. Hades is a place of separation from the righteous.

4. Notice Abraham/Lazarus are never referred to as being part of Hades.

(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 might not come to this place of torment.'"

Luke 16:26-28

5. Hades is a place of no escape.

6. What does the rich man call the place "Hades" again (v.28)?

7. In Hades, you have no say about your life anymore!

(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!'"

Luke 16:29-30

8. Hades is a place for the unrighteous after death.

9. Listening to the Scriptures is God's intended way for people to change their lives (v.29).

10. Repentance would keep others from this place of torment (v.30).

POINT: Jesus had not died yet at this point. The using of Abraham and a picture of Lazarus being in his bosom was for the Jewish mind to understand things a little clearer. They relied on Abraham as their father. (*See Luke 3:8; John 8:39*)

QUESTION: How does one know Hades is a temporary holding place of the unrighteous until the day of judgement?

(10) "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (11) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (14) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Revelation 20:10-15

11. This is the final judgement scene.

12. What happens to Hades and death (v.14)?

13. The lake of fire is called what (v.14)?

14. What happens to everyone who's name is not found in the book of life (v.15)?

15. The lake of fire and brimstone is the eternal place of judgement for the unrighteous.

16. The lake of fire and brimstone is the devil's final place of abode. It is not a temporary place but an eternal place of torment!

B. Gehenna - the permanent dwelling of torment for the soul and the body.

"And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Gehenna)."

Matthew 10:28

1. Who should we fear most, God or man? 2. The word "destroy" does not mean extinction but to suffer loss of well-being, not the loss of being. (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words)

ILLUSTRATION: We have seen people who make wrong choices in their lives and we

say they have destroyed their own life. We don't mean they have been killed off but they have suffered loss and ruined their lives.

"If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire."

Mark 9:43

3. The word "hell" is the Greek word "Gehenna".

4. How horrible of a thought is it to think of cutting off your hand just to keep from stealing? How painful would that be?

5. The gruesome thought and pain of cutting off your hand is one thing, but the pain and torment involved in "Gehenna" is far more agonizing. Jesus uses this to illustrate the importance of doing whatever is necessary to keep from going into the unquenchable fire!

"Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

Mark 9:44

6. What two terrible things are part of "Gehenna"?

7. Jesus is bringing to light the real spiritual world awaiting those unrepentant.

POINT: The word "Gehenna" had a significant meaning to the Jewish mind. It got its origin from the valley of Hinnom, which was just south of Jerusalem. This valley was part of their history where they burned the bodies of children as an offering to strange gods.

"They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind."

Jeremiah 7:31

8. The valley of Hinnom had its name changed by God to the valley of Slaughter because God found their acts repulsive!

(32) "'Therefore, behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place. (33) The dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten them away.'"

Jeremiah 7:32-33

9. The valley of Hinnom became known as a place where God piled up the carcasses of the unrighteous dead.

10. As the 1st century Jews approached Jerusalem from the south, they would have to pass by this valley on the left. It had become a garbage dump. Carcasses of dead animals were visible. One could not help but smell the stench of smoldering flesh and see the hideous sight of thousands upon thousands of worms and maggots eating on what was not being burned.

11. This was the illustration Jesus used to best describe "Gehenna", the final abode of the unrighteous' body and soul.

(47) "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell (Gehenna), (48) where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

Mark 9:47-48

12. Jesus was indicating how agonizing and on-going this punishment would be.

13. Go back and read **Revelation 20:10-15** again and see that the lake of fire and brimstone is the place of eternal punishment. It is the equivalent of "Gehenna".

(28) "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, (29) and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgement."

John 5:28-29

14. Everybody will be raised, some to judgment and others to life.

NOTE: Some versions have translated the word "Hades" with the word "grave." "It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost; in point of time it is, for such, intermediate between decease and the doom of Gehenna." (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words - p. 518)

III. HEAVEN - THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE RIGHTEOUS ETERNALLY.

A. Heaven - the dwelling place of God.

(14) "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

I Thessalonians 4:14-17

1. Where are those who have already "fallen asleep" (died) in Jesus (v.14)?

2. What is God going to do with those already with Jesus (v.14)?
3. The dead in Christ will rise first, speaking of bodily (v.16).
4. What happens to the faithful ones remaining on earth (v.17)?
5. The eternal hope is to be in the presence of the Lord always.

(7) "And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

II Thessalonians 1:7-9

6. What two groups of people are not going to be part of God's world (v.8)?
7. Eternal destruction is described as "away from the presence of the Lord" (v.9).
- 8 . Being in the presence of God in heaven means heaven is the opposite of pain, torment and destruction. Heaven is dominated by the awesome presence and glory of God.

ILLUSTRATION: In the Old Testament, God promised Moses that He would be with Israel. Moses asked God, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" But God answered and said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live." (***Exodus 33:18-20***)

9. Does this mean there must be a change from this physical body to a body suited to be with God, in His presence and true glory?

(50) "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

I Corinthians 15:50-52

10. What cannot inherit the kingdom of God (v.50)?
11. What will happen to all that will enter God's kingdom and glory (v.51)?
12. How quick will this change come about (v.52)?
13. The kingdom of heaven is an eternal, imperishable, spiritual realm. It is not subject to decay, to rust, or touched by any evil.

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal."

Matthew 6:20

(42) "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; (43) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; (44) it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."

I Corinthians 15:42-44

14. What kind of descriptions are used to describe the body that is resurrected?

15. The spiritual body will have new, powerful capabilities.

B. Heaven - a place to desire and dwell.

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Philippians 1:21

"But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better."

Philippians 1:23

1. What did Paul see death as?

2. To depart this life was going to take Paul where?

POINT: What makes heaven so great is not it's physical make-up, which many seem to want to focus on, but the presence of God and Christ. Many times man focuses on the beauty and riches of heaven and that becomes the draw. It is easy to miss God and Christ at that point.

CONCLUSION: We need to make sure our lives are headed the right direction. If you have any questions in regard to this study, please feel free to ask them. We always want to grow and move forward in our spiritual lives.