

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Hades in the Bible Is....*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves at Luke 16:19, which begins the account of the rich man and Lazarus.

But don't turn there because we won't start those verses until next week. As you might know, the account introduces us to Hades. As I developed material to explain what Hades is, so you would have the background for that account, I found that it provided more than enough material for its own sermon. In fact, I had to cut out quite a bit of material just to keep it to one sermon...such as all the material on Gehenna and Tartarus.

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I would like to begin by asking you to take your minds to the Old Testament. Think of places that discuss heaven and hell or eternal rewards and eternal punishment.

Interestingly, even though we know heaven and hell are of incredible importance, you probably can't think of many verses discussing them.

Unless I am missing something, this is the only verse in all of the Old Testament discussing eternal life and eternal punishment...

Daniel 12:2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

There is one verse that seems to discuss eternal punishment...

Isaiah 66:24 "They shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

You probably recognize this verse because Jesus quoted it to describe hell.

There are a few verses that subtly describe heaven...

Psalm 16:11 In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Here heaven is loosely described as the joy of being in God's presence.

Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Here heaven is described as being with God forever.

Psalm 73:24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.

Here heaven is described as being brought into glory.

Isaiah 26:19 Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy...the earth will give birth to the dead.

This verse describes resurrection.

But none of these verses come close to the clarity of the New Testament

This is because, as we have talked about before, revelation was both progressive and cumulative:

- It was progressive in that more revelation was given over time
- It was cumulative in that it builds on previous revelation

Because of the limited revelation in the Old Testament, instead of saying people went to heaven or hell, when they died, where does it say they went?

Sheol, the pit, or the grave...and this brings us to Lesson One...

Lesson One: Hades (Greek) or Sheol (Hebrew) is the temporary abode of the dead.

The Hebrew word [Sheol](#) is the name of the temporary abode, or location, for the souls of the dead until they go to their permanent home in heaven or hell.

In the recent Sunday school class I taught on Scripture's reliability I told you that when Alexander the Great conquered the known world and made everything Greek there needed to be a Greek translation of the Old Testament, because it was in Hebrew. That Greek translation is called the Septuagint, and when you see it mentioned in your Bible it says LXX, which is the Roman numeral for 70, because the Septuagint was translated by 70 scholars.

When the Septuagint translated the Hebrew word Sheol into Greek, it translated it as Hades. So, to be clear, Sheol and Hades are the same, but one is Hebrew and the other is Greek.

When the Bible discusses Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament:

- It does not distinguish between the righteous or unrighteous
- It does not discuss eternal reward or eternal punishment.

The reason is that Hades was a location that contained both the righteous and the unrighteous dead, or believers or unbelievers.

For example, here are four verses, and I could give more, about the righteous going to Sheol:

1. **Genesis 37:35 [Jacob said], "I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning."**
2. **Job 14:13 Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past!**
3. **Psalm 88:3 My life draws near to Sheol.**
4. **Isaiah 38:10 I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years.**

Here are four verses, and I could give more, about the unrighteous going to Sheol:

1. **Numbers 16:30 If the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth...and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord."**
2. **Psalm 9:17 The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.**
3. **Psalm 31:17 O Let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol.**
4. **Isaiah 5:14 Sheol has enlarged its appetite...and the...multitude [of revelers] will go down.**

So, the Old Testament shows the righteous and wicked going to Sheol or Hades.

Now let me share something that is related, but might not seem that way at first...

One of the more common questions people have about Jesus's death is this...

Where was He for those days and nights between His death and resurrection?

First, let me tell you where He WASN'T. He wasn't in heaven!

After Jesus was raised from the dead, Mary Magdalene went back to the tomb. Jesus was there, but she didn't recognize Him. She thought He was the gardener.

When Jesus said her name, she recognized Him and was about to embrace Him, but...

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I HAVE NOT YET ASCENDED TO MY FATHER."

Or, I have not yet been to heaven!

Jesus didn't ascend to heaven until His ascension.

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So, if He didn't go to heaven, where was He?

Jesus used Jonah to answer this for us...

Matthew 12:40 As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH.

Jesus was in the same location others were when they died.

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Listen to this...

Hebrews 2:17 In all things [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren.

This refers to the ways Jesus became like us. Most obviously, He became a man, who experienced the same things we experience:

- Hunger
- Thirst
- Fatigue
- Temptation
- Betrayal
- Hurt

And even death

But Jesus' identification with us didn't just end when His earthly life ended. He even identified with us in His death in that He went to the same place people went when they died...and that's Hades.

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Hopefully you're still in **Acts 2**.

The context is the Holy Spirit fell on people at Pentecost, and they began speaking in tongues. Some observers thought they were drunk, so Peter took the opportunity to tell them what happened: they were seeing the result of Jesus' resurrection:

- Jesus ascended to heaven in **Acts 1** and sent the Holy Spirit in **Acts 2**.
- The Holy Spirit couldn't descend unless Jesus first ascended and sent Him.

And the only way Jesus could ascend is if He was raised from the dead...look at **verse 24**...

Acts 2:24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. 25a For David says concerning him

Pause right here...

Peter is going to quote David in **Psalm 16**, but you need to know David isn't just talking about Jesus, he's talking as though he IS Jesus:

- Jesus is speaking THROUGH David about His time in the grave.
- So read these words as though Jesus Himself is saying them while He was dead!

Acts 2:25b “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; 26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. 27 For YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, or let your Holy One see corruption.

Remember, Hades is the New Testament equivalent of Sheol. This is a quote of **Psalm 16**, and in **Psalm 16** it says Sheol instead of Hades, because Sheol is the Hebrew word for **Hades**.

Notice Jesus is dead, but He's not in heaven. He's in Hades.

So you say, “Maybe it just says Hades because it is an Old Testament quote.”

Look at **verse 31**...Peter is speaking...

Acts 2:31 he (this is David) foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NOT ABANDONED TO HADES, nor did his flesh see corruption.

Peter also confirmed Jesus was in Hades.

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Here's the timeline

Jesus is crucified, resurrected, and forty days later He ascended to heaven. But what did He say to the thief on the cross?

Luke 23:43 “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Maybe you have wondered why Jesus told the thief on the cross that he would be with Him in paradise...when He didn't go to heaven for another 43 days?

The answer is that **paradise** is referring to the place of comfort in Abraham's bosom. When Jesus died, He took the thief with him to this compartment in Hades.

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Hades has two compartments:

- There's a place of comfort, which is also called paradise and Abraham's bosom
- There's a place of torment

And this brings us to Lesson Two...

Lesson Two: Believers were removed from Hades at Jesus's ascension.

Please turn to **Ephesians 4**.

Ephesians 4:8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

This is referring to Jesus's ascension in **Acts 1**. Let's deal with the end of the verse first. It says **he gave gifts to men**.

This is what we just read in **Acts 2**. Jesus ascended and then sent the Holy Spirit who is the bestower of gifts. We call them the gifts of the Spirit. Because Jesus sent the Holy Spirit that gave these gifts, He is credited with giving the gifts.

It also says He **led a host of captives** with him when He ascended. In other words, when Jesus ascended to heaven He took people with Him.

Who are these captives it is talking about?

People who were in Hades, and they are called captives because they couldn't go to heaven before this. They were captive in the place of comfort in Hades.

Look at **verse 9**...

Ephesians 4:9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?)

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He first **descended into the lower regions of the earth**, which I take to mean Hades.

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Now here's the question...

Why couldn't Old Testament believers go to heaven? Why did they have to remain captive in Hades?

The answer is, Jesus hadn't died yet. People's sins had only been covered by the animal sacrifices, but had not been taken away...

Hebrews 10:4 It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The veil hadn't been torn yet...

Matthew 27:51 Behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Two verses in Hebrews describe the veil as symbolic of the separation between God and man and with the veil torn we could enter God's presence:

- **Hebrews 6:19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain**
- **Hebrews 10:20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,**

When the veil was torn we could enter God's presence...but not before that.

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I've said before if I had to use one word to describe the Old Testament it would be the word separation and if I had to use one word to describe the New Testament it would be reconciliation.

The Old Testament really screamed separation. Two of the clearest manifestations of God's presence were the ark and Sinai:

- Think of the Jews at Sinai: they couldn't touch the mountain or they'd die because of God's presence.
- Think of the ark: they couldn't touch it or they'd die. They Philistines and Uzzah learned this the hard way.

It's hard for me to believe people could go to heaven before Christ died and removed their sins.

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Also listen to what Jesus said...

John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man

Jesus Himself said nobody went to heaven before Him.

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Some of you might be wondering about Enoch and Elijah. Let me read the verses about them and explain how they still harmonize with this interpretation...

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

We are told that God took Enoch, but we are not told that God took him to heaven.

2 Kings 2:11 Chariots of fire and horses of fire separated [Elijah and Elisha]. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

This isn't the heaven where God dwells.

Heaven is used multiple ways in scripture. For example, think about Paul's vision of heaven, which I think was a vision versus an actual trip...

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.

Paul discussed the **third heaven**

The first heaven is the earth's atmosphere or let's say the blue sky...

Genesis 8:2 the rain from the heavens was restrained

We don't think this means rain from where God dwells. We understand it means rain from the clouds in the sky.

The second heaven is outer space with the stars...

Genesis 15:5 [God] brought [Abraham] outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them."

The third heaven is where God dwells or what we think of as heaven itself.ⁱ

The verse says a whirlwind took Elijah into heaven and I believe it means up into the sky. He transported like Philip in **Acts 8:39-40**.ⁱⁱ

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Now if you happen to disagree with this and believe that Enoch and Elijah ascended to heaven itself where God dwells, I don't know how to reconcile that with Jesus's words...

John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man

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We've talked about believers being removed from the compartment of comfort in Hades. What about the unbelievers being removed from the other compartment, the place of torment?

This brings us to lesson three...

Lesson Three: Unbelievers will be removed from Hades at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Please turn to **Revelation 20**.

When I say the word resurrection we almost always think positively: resurrection unto eternal life in heaven with God. But there is another resurrection unto eternal life in the lake of fire. Listen to these verses...

John 5:28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT.

Jesus mentioned resurrection for believers and unbelievers.

This resurrection of unbelievers takes place on what's commonly called the day of judgment.

Jesus talked about this day...

Matthew 10:15 Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on THE DAY OF JUDGMENT for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that townⁱⁱⁱ

Paul talked about this day...

Acts 17:31 HE HAS FIXED A DAY on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed (this is Jesus as we'll see in a moment)^{iv}

Peter talked about this day...

2 Peter 2:9 The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until THE DAY OF JUDGMENT,^v

Hopefully you noticed that this judgment is repeatedly said to take place on a day, versus days. That's because in one moment, the place of torment in Hades will be emptied. All unbelievers who have ever lived will be resurrected to be judged.

As far as when this takes place, John MacArthur said, *"This judgment takes place in the indescribable void between the end of the present universe (Revelation 20:11) and the creation of the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1)."*

Look with me at **verse 11**...

Revelation 20:11a Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.

God sits on the throne in the Person of Jesus Christ. We know this is the Son because He does all the judging...

John 5:22 The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son

Jesus occupies one of two roles for every person who has ever lived: Savior or Judge.

Although many people think **Hebrews 4:12** is referring to the Bible, it's referring to Jesus, and listen to what it says about Him...

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God (Jesus is the word of God) is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from HIS SIGHT, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of HIM to whom we must give account.

The use of the pronouns **His** and **Him** tell us we are talking about a Person, and that Person is Christ:

- He's the One we must give account to...
- He's the One who has nothing hidden from His sight...
- He's the One who has everything uncovered and laid bare before Him.

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It might be tempting to say, “*Can you imagine what it would be like standing before the Father after rejecting His Son?*”

Unbelievers don't stand before the Father if they reject the Son. They stand before the Son if they reject the Son. Imagine standing before Him after spending a lifetime without acknowledging His sacrifice. Terrifying.

And we know it is terrifying based on the rest of the verse...

Revelation 20:11b From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

This is how terrifying the throne is: even the earth and the sky want to get away from its presence. They don't slowly move away. They **flee**. But there is nowhere to hide.

The idea is if the earth and sky can't hide, nobody can...as **verse 12** says...

Revelation 20:12a And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne,

Picture a throne large enough that all unbelievers throughout history can be stretched out before it.

The dead here are unbelievers who remained spiritually dead in their sins. They were born physically, but they were never born again spiritually. When they died physically, they were still dead spiritually.

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The words **great and small are** another way of telling us nobody escapes this judgment:

- Not the greatest, most famous, wealthiest, most powerful people in the world
- Not the smallest, most insignificant, poorest, weakest people in the world.

All unbelievers will be judged.

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And notice it says they are **standing before the throne**.

Think of a courtroom. When do people stand?

They stand when the judge enters, and they stand when they are sentenced.

This isn't a trial. It only consists of a sentencing. Nobody will be:

- Making excuses for what they did
- Explaining why they rejected Jesus.
- Talking about how this happened during their lifetimes
- Discussing how they were mistreated

They have no defense.

1 John 2:1 says Jesus is our advocate, and it has the idea of a defense attorney. But these people rejected their defense attorney.

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Now we get to see some books that are present...

Revelation 20:12b and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

The **book of life** is commonly called, “The Lamb’s Book of Life.” It contains the names of all believers. Another way to describe the book is it contains the name of all those who will NOT appear at this judgment.

It isn’t that believers escaped judgment. It’s that our sins were already judged on the cross.

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It says other **books [are] opened** and the unbelievers are judged by **what was written in these books, according to what they had done**. This means these books contain the records of these people’s lives. Maybe there’s a book for each person. The books provide the evidence that these people were not good enough to get to heaven.

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Now we get to see where the unbelieving dead were before this judgment...

Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

This verse is about the location of their physical bodies and souls.

Death and **Hades** are frequently mentioned together because of their relationship: **Death** brought **Hades**, or **Hades** was necessary because of death. People died and then they need a place to go and that place is Hades.

The **sea** was known as a bottomless abyss. That’s why **Micah 7:19** says...

Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA.

The **sea** was considered a place where nothing could return from it. That’s why our sin is cast there.

It’s probably mentioned to show that no matter the location of a body, God can gather it for this judgment.

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Hades is where their souls were located. They are brought up from the place of torment and are about to enter an even worse torment.

Revelation 20:14a Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

We can see that **Hades** and the **lake of fire** are not the same, because **Hades** is **thrown into the lake of fire**. There is confusion about Hades being hell because the King James translates Hades as hell, but **the lake of fire** is what we commonly think of as hell.

Do I think that Death and Hades are literally thrown into the lake of fire?

No, I don’t. They are both temporary and I think this is God’s way of showing them ending.

The last vestiges or echoes of sin are finally destroyed. Here’s what I mean:

- Sin came into the world and brought **Death**.
- **Death** came into the world and brought **Hades** because dead people had to go somewhere.

- With sin ending **Death** also comes to an end.
- With Death ending, **Hades** also comes to an end.

The end of **Death and Hades** is signified by them being **thrown into the lake of fire**.^{vi}

Revelation 20:14b This is the second death, the lake of fire.

This is called the **Second Death** because unbelievers die physically and then they die spiritually and eternally when they go to hell. But it is almost misleading to call it the **second death**, because they are very much alive. They go on living in the lake of fire.

So:

- Unbelievers experience a physical birth followed by a physical death and then a spiritual death.
- Believers are born again. We experience a physical birth, then a spiritual birth followed only by a physical death.

Revelation 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

If you repent of your sins and put your faith in Christ, then your name is written in this book, and you will never face the great White throne judgment.

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Let me conclude by getting you to notice something...

Halfway through **verse 12** it says...

Revelation 20:12b And THE DEAD WERE JUDGED BY WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO WHAT THEY HAD DONE.

Halfway through **verse 13** it says...

Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and THEY WERE JUDGED, EACH ONE OF THEM, ACCORDING TO WHAT THEY HAD DONE.

As I have said before, God repeats himself when he wants to make sure we don't miss something, and twice we are told that these people are **judged according to what they had done**.

If you have repented and put your faith in Christ you receive His righteousness. Let me tell you how this reads for you...

Believers are judged according to WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE.

But unbelievers who don't have Christ's righteousness must be judged by what they have done.

This is not teaching salvation by works. Instead, because all these people go to hell, it shows that they couldn't be saved by works.

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If you have never repented of your sins and put your faith in Christ, do so today so your name can be written in the Book of Life.

If you have any questions about anything I have discussed in this sermon I will be up front after service and out consider it a privilege to be able to speak to you. Let's pray.

ⁱ For all the verses discussing the three heavens: Genesis 8:2, Deuteronomy 11:11, 1 Kings 8:35, Genesis 15:5, Psalm 8:3, Isaiah 13:10, 1 Kings 8:30, 2 Chronicles 30:27, Psalm 123:1

ⁱⁱ After Elijah was taken up, a search party even went out looking for him.

2 Kings 2:17 They sent therefore fifty men. And for three days they sought him but did not find him.

It's as though he'd been transported somewhere on the earth, but they couldn't locate him.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable on THE DAY OF JUDGMENT for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more tolerable ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT for the land of Sodom than for you."**

Matthew 12:36 I tell you, ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."...42 The queen of the South will rise up at THE JUDGMENT with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

^{iv} **Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and THE COMING JUDGMENT, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."**

Romans 2:5 says But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. The White Throne Judgment is when this wrath is revealed.

Romans 2:16 ON THAT DAY when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

^v **2 Peter 3:7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the DAY OF JUDGMENT and destruction of the ungodly.**

^{vi} There are two ways **Death** is temporary:

1. First, it only exists until this judgment. Then it "dies" when it is **thrown into the lake of fire**.
2. Second, **Death** was temporary in that unbelievers only stay "dead" until they are resurrected to be judged before this Throne. Then **Death** will no longer exist because all the dead will be alive and there will be no more sin to lead to further death.

Hades is also temporary. It only exists until this judgment. When all unbelievers are resurrected out of Hades both compartments will be empty and it will also be **thrown into the lake of fire**.