

## A Place Called Hades

King David prophesied, “My flesh also will rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:9, 10). The apostle Peter explained that the patriarch David was looking to God’s promise of raising the Christ to sit on his throne (Acts 2:29-31). Jesus Christ died on a cross on Calvary, but He was then raised up on the third day.

“Sheol” is the Hebrew equivalent to the place the New Testament calls “Hades” (Acts 2:27). Hades is a Greek word for the realm of the dead, the place where spirits depart at the time of death. Death occurs when the physical body is no longer an adequate dwelling for the spirit (James 2:26). The body returns to the dust from which it was created, while the spirit returns to God’s charge (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Because of sin, God has determined that men are appointed to die (Hebrews 9:27; Ecclesiastes 3:2). When man dies, his soul goes to Hades.

When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, His spirit went to Hades or Sheol, but He did not remain in the realm of the dead because He was raised up. Jesus promised one of the thieves at His side that he would be with Him “in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Jesus and the thief went to Paradise the same day they died. This Paradise about which the Lord was talking was not the heavenly Paradise where His Father dwells because He did not return to His Father until He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11; 2:32-33), but rather, He was revealing a Paradise in Hades. This Paradise corresponds with “Abraham’s bosom” where the poor man Lazarus was carried to be comforted (Luke 16:23, 25).

Jesus also taught that there is such a thing as torment in Hades. If you recall the Lord’s lesson, the rich man, who never helped the beggar Lazarus, died and went to Hades, too, but instead of being comforted in death, he was tormented (Luke 16:22-24). In Hades the dead wait in peaceful rest or in torment until the resurrection of all men from the graves (John 5:28). Some will come forth to the resurrection of condemnation; others will be raised to the resurrection of life (v. 29).

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” (Revelation 14:13). By partaking of life and death, Christ came to destroy the devil and to release men from the bondage of the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). All those who sleep in Jesus, who die in the Lord, have hope. They will be resurrected from the realm of the dead to meet the Lord in the clouds and forever be with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16-17). This living hope anchors the faithful and obedient in the comfort of Hades because they know their souls will not be left in Hades.