

THE PLACES GOD HAS PREPARED FOR ALL MANKIND

HEAVEN, PARADISE, THE THIRD HEAVEN, HELL, GRAVE, LAKE OF FIRE AND OTHER PLACES GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THE DEAD



In this lesson we will explain a few aspects that were found in last week's writing. Have you ever thought of the meaning of these words we find in the Bible: Heaven, Paradise, Hell, Death, Hades, Abyss, Tartarus, Grave, and Lake of Fire? To recap, let us look at a reference we used last week:

²²And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into **Abraham's bosom**: the rich man also died, and was buried; ²³And in **hell** he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. – **Luke 16:22-23**

We see here very clearly that after death, two people ended up in two very different places.

- The beggar, Lazarus, was found in “Abraham's bosom” which refers to a heavenly presence with God, the destiny of the believer, suggesting a close and personal relationship. However, it is not heaven itself. The Old Testament believers would only go to heaven once the atoning work of Jesus was complete (John 14:6).
- The rich man experienced “hell”, an existence away from the presence of God and where the inhabitants suffer torment.

A logical reading and interpretation of the Bible shows that up to the death of Jesus Christ, all people who passed away went to Hades, but to one of two sections, as shown in the parable. As demonstrated in the parable believers and unbelievers could not communicate, or cross over from one side to the other.

Once Jesus died, all believers who were then still in Hades, were taken to heaven. Thus, while in the parable Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, representing the believer, all of them are now in heaven, and any believer who dies in Christ in this dispensation goes to heaven directly, just as Jesus told the man on the cross – that he would be with Him in Paradise **on that same day**. It is therefore clear that this man never went to Hades, even the safe side. Interestingly, the man who ended up with Jesus in paradise never confessed his sins publicly; did not repeat a sinner's prayer; and had no works to show. All God needs for us to be saved is a genuine change of heart, as demonstrated by this person on the cross.

The rich man, representing unbelievers of all ages, is today still in Hades, waiting the final judgement. The same applies to the other man on the cross who cursed Jesus and died in his sins.

At this point, the emphasis of the parable is not to define exactly where Lazarus and the rich man found themselves, but to show the permanent effect of choices made on the Earth. With this in mind, let us briefly look at some terms that are found in the Bible, referring to various places. We need to make it clear that in certain translations, original Greek and Hebrew

words may have been translated differently, sometimes affecting our understanding of the context.

HEAVEN

Greek: οὐρανός (ouranós)

Heaven is described as the domain of God. The Word of God tells us that heaven is the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:40, Matthew 6:9). This is where His throne is, there are angels worshipping Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven at this time, seated at the right hand of God the Father. Philippians 3:20 says very plainly that "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ". It is often described as being outside of our known world, and above the stars in what we see as heaven. It is clearly outside of time and space as we experience it on the Earth.

PARADISE

Greek: παράδεισος (paradeisos)

Paradise is another word for heaven and the words are often used interchangeably. Jesus used the word in Luke 23:43; Paul had a vision of heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; and it is used by Jesus Himself in Revelation 2:7 to refer to the domain of God where believers are after their earthly death.

THIRD HEAVEN

The third heaven, as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 12:2, is yet another description of Paradise as used in 2 Corinthians 12:4. What about the first and second heaven then? It appears as if the first heaven would refer to what we as humans see above us – the sky and the clouds, the atmospheric heaven. The second heaven is likely the celestial (sun, moon, and stars), spiritual realm where demons dwell, according to Ephesians 6:12. Since one third of the angels were cast out of (the first) heaven, it is likely that their domain is the space above the Earth where humans cannot venture.

DEATH

Greek: θάνατος (thánatos)

Death is not the end of life. For the believer, death is merely that passing stage from this life to eternity. For the unbeliever it is the first death. It is the condition an unbeliever finds themselves in, away from God. The second death, as shown in Revelation 21:8, is the final separation from God. Interestingly, death is shown in Revelation 20:14 as an entity and is cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death for the unbeliever.

HELL

Greek: γέεννα (geenna)

Hell means the same as Hades and the two names are often used interchangeably. Note that hell is not the lake of fire, as both “death” and “hell” (Hades) are cast into the lake of fire. See Revelation 20:14.

GRAVE

Greek: τάφος (taphos)

While we see “grave” as referring to a place where the body of a deceased is put to rest, it often means something different when used in the Bible. There is the physical grave, qeber, but it also sometimes refers to death. Given that not all dead people were buried in a grave, depending on how they died, using the word grave to refer to death itself makes sense.

HADES

Greek: Ἅιδης (hadés)

Hades is the temporary holding place for unbelievers of all ages until they are finally condemned to the lake of fire. In the Old Testament it is called Sheol. It is mostly translated into English as Death. See Revelation 20:13, New King James Version.

ABYSS

Greek: ἄβυσσος (abussos)

The abyss is also known as the bottomless pit, a very deep gulf or gap in the lowest parts of the earth used as the reception room for the fallen angels. It is a temporary holding place for the fallen angel or demons, until they are cast into the lake of fire after the final judgment. See Jude verse 6.

TARTARUS

Greek: τάρταρος (tartaró)

Tartarus is a place, indicated as below or underground, where the fallen angels are kept in bondage, waiting for their final sentencing at the end of time (Revelation 20:10). The word is found only once in the Bible, in 2 Peter 2:4. Here the word “Tartarus” is often translated as “hell”, even in the King James Bible.

LAKE OF FIRE

The lake of fire is not hell, as death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). It is a separate place reserved for all unbelievers of all times. Currently there is no one in the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the final destination for all unbelievers, in this order: first the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:20); then the devil [and by implication also the fallen angels which are now in Tartarus] (Revelation 20:10); after that death and hell (Revelation 20:14); and finally, all unbelievers whose names are not in the book of life (Revelation 20:12-15).

CONCLUSION

Ignore the fallen angels and their destination, as we are not angels. Human beings are not destined for the abyss or Tartarus. For us as human beings then, in this dispensation, there are only two possible destinies immediately after death:

- **hell**, the place to keep unbelievers in waiting before the final judgement

or

- **heaven**, in the permanent presence of God.

The choice you make on Earth in the present, determines where you will end up in the future. Ensure you make the right choice. Once you have arrived at your destiny, you cannot change your mind or even try to communicate the horrible truth of separation from God, back to your loved ones.