

What Happens After Death?

Lesson 2:

Hades And The Return Of Christ



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

What Happens After Death Lesson

2: Hades And The Return Of Christ

Learn about the realm of the dead and about what will happen when Jesus returns

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW76

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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In our first study, we established that mankind possess a soul that survives physical death. We established that this separates mankind from all the rest of God's earthly creation – as it is only mankind that has been made in the image of God. Then, we established that physical death is a certainty, we identified two things involved in physical death, and answered the question, “Why do we have to die?”

While we have discussed what happens to the physical body upon death, we have not yet focused much on what happens to the soul after death. Beginning in this lesson (having established the foundations in lesson 1 concerning the soul of man and death), we want to put our focus on the things we are taught will happen to the soul upon physical death.

This has been the subject of a great amount of speculation and false teaching. Some say that there is no conscious existence after death. Some say that Jesus Christ has already returned (in A.D. 70). Some say that there will be a place called “purgatory.” Some say that there will be a rapture. Some say that there will be a great battle called “Armageddon.” Some say that there will be an earthly 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ upon His return.

As we begin this second lesson, remember what we established at the beginning of lesson 1. Remember that the only way we can know about the spiritual realm and what happens to our souls after

death is by studying the things that have been revealed to us by God in His word! And, as we study these things, there will likely be some questions we have that have not been answered. In these areas, let's remember that God has revealed everything that is necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) – and that the secret things belong to the Lord (Deuteronomy 29:29). Let us simply be determined to accept (by faith) the answers God has given us and determine to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), speaking where He speaks and being silent where He is silent!

The purpose of this second lesson is to establish what the Bible teaches concerning (1) Hades and (2) The return of Jesus Christ.

Hades

In lesson 1, we established that death involves the cessation of vital functions of the body as well as the separation of the body and the spirit. The body, we discussed, will turn back to dust. But, what about the spirit/soul? We established that the soul of man survives physical death. But how?

What is “Hades”?

The first thing the Scriptures help us to understand regarding the soul after it departs from the body concerns the subject of Hades. Unfortunately, there has been some unnecessary confusion on this subject because of the way translators of the King James Version translated the Greek word for Hades in a couple of passages. For instance, in Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2:27, the King James Version has the word for “Hades” as “Hell.”

However, as we will see through this study, whenever the Bible speaks concerning “Hades,” it is speaking of something entirely different than when it speaks concerning “Hell.” Therefore, the words cannot be used interchangeably. “Hell” (as we'll study in the next lesson) refers to an eternal place of punishment that is reserved for those who have been disobedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, “Hades” refers to the spiritual realm of the dead.

Hades is the place in which the souls of the dead are currently. Whenever the Scriptures talk of Hades, they frequently connect Hades and death with one another. 1 Corinthians 15:55 says, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” Revelation 20:14 pictures after the great final Judgment when “Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.” As further evidence of the close connection between death and Hades, Acts 2:27, 31 demonstrates that Jesus Christ went into this Hadean realm upon being put to death on the cross. Verse 27 records a prophecy that God would not leave Jesus’ soul in Hades. Verse 31 demonstrates that David (who wrote the Psalm containing this prophecy) was speaking concerning “the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.” So, it was clearly this time after Jesus’ physical death and prior to His resurrection from the dead that He spent time in the Hadean realm.

Hades, though, is not an eternal realm. This can especially be seen from Revelation 20:14. Whenever Jesus Christ returns to end this world and the great resurrection and Judgment take place, there will no longer be a need for Death and Hades. Therefore, the picture is that Death and Hades will be cast into the great lake of fire. This place, then, is only a temporary realm for those who have died to exist prior to the return of Jesus Christ. These individuals are awaiting their eternal destinations which will be revealed to them on the Day of Judgment.

Hades described in Luke 16:19-31

The greatest amount of information we have been given concerning this Hadean realm comes from what Jesus teaches in Luke 16:19-31: “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he

lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

Notice, specifically, that this place is identified as being “Hades.” Verse 23 says that the rich man found himself “in torments in Hades” after he had died. Then, clearly the passage indicates that Lazarus was in the same realm – just in another section. This passage, then, fits with what we have already observed concerning the Hadean realm being the realm of the dead. Both of these individuals had experienced physical death. Now they found themselves in this Hadean realm.

This text indicates that there are two sections/parts to this Hadean realm: Abraham’s bosom (a place of comfort) and Torments (a place depicted by pain and fire). In between the two, the passage teaches that there is a great gulf that is “fixed.”

Does this passage record a parable of Jesus, as some claim that it does? A parable is an earthly story that conveys a greater spiritual message. Admittedly, it does begin in a very similar way to Jesus’ parables (compare Luke 16:19 and Luke 16:1). However, Jesus is exceptionally specific in this passage (contrary to His parables). If this passage records a parable, this is the only parable in

which Jesus names anyone (i.e. Lazarus, Abraham). Yet, regardless of whether this passage records a parable or not, remember that Jesus used parables to convey spiritual truths. So, whether this passage is a parable or not does not change Jesus' overall message. Surely Jesus is conveying a very specific message concerning what is awaiting individuals after death in this Hadean realm.

One of the facts you should be impressed with concerning this text is the consciousness that exists in the Hadean realm. So, just as we saw in lesson 1, physical death is not the end of our conscious existence. Instead, it was pointed out (looking to Luke 16:19-31) that both the rich man and Lazarus continued to exist in the Hadean realm – one in comfort and one in torment. We noted that the rich man could see (verse 23), speak (verse 24), feel pain (verse 25), and remember (verses 27-28). All of these things demonstrate consciousness in the Hadean realm.

Paradise

One of the two sections of this Hadean realm is identified as being “Paradise,” or “Abraham’s bosom.” Luke 16:22 records that the beggar (Lazarus) died and was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom. Also notice a couple of points regarding Jesus – and see that He identified this place as “Paradise.” In Luke 23:43, Jesus promised one of the two thieves who were being crucified beside of Jesus, “today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Now, was this “Paradise” Heaven? Not according to Acts chapter 2. Recall that Acts 2:27, 31 makes reference to Jesus’ soul going to Hades between the time of His death and resurrection. Therefore, whenever Jesus promised that the thief would be in Paradise with Jesus that day, He was referencing the part of the Hadean realm He identified as “Abraham’s bosom” in Luke 16.

Both of these passage demonstrate that this is a portion of the Hadean realm that is full of comfort. Again, it is called “Paradise” by Jesus in Luke 23:43. Then, in Luke 16, Jesus demonstrates the comfort that is found in this section of Hades. While Jesus primarily focuses on the rich man and the torment he experiences in Luke 16, notice the contrasts between

the torment that he is experiencing and the way Lazarus is being comforted (specifically in verse 25).

As we consider the great blessing of going to this place after death (in contrast to going to Torments), we should be encouraged to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God! Notice carefully that only those who die in the Lord will be blessed in this way. Revelation 14:13 says, “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” Clearly, this passage indicates that our works will follow us and we will rest from our labors.

Galatians 6:7-8 teaches the same principle: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” We will each reap according to what we have sown! Not only is this principle true concerning eternal life in Heaven and eternal punishment in Hell; but, it is also a fair conclusion regarding the Hadean realm. Remember, only those who die “in the Lord” are going to experience rest from their labors – because their works will follow after them. On the other hand, those who live contrary to the will of God (like the rich man had evidently been guilty of doing) will not be granted this great rest. Consider that Jesus did not tell the impenitent thief that he was going to be with Him in Paradise – only the one who believed in Him and turned away from his sins (Luke 23:43).

Torments

This part of the Hadean realm is also identified in Luke 16. In verse 23, Jesus says (concerning the rich man), “And being in torments in Hades....” This man (and all who will go to this section of Hades after death) reaped according to what he had sown. Now, consider some things Jesus identifies in this passage about the torment those who are in this place experience.

(1) It is a place of torment. This man cried out to Father Abraham for mercy in verse 24, saying that he was tormented in the flame. This man was,

therefore, in an extreme amount of anguish and pain. There was nothing comforting or pleasant about where he was.

(2) It is a place of torment in fire. Again, this man expresses extreme anguish over his torment in flame/fire. Furthermore, he expresses the desire for his tongue to be cooled. So, this is a place of great pain pictured by suffering in fire.

(3) It is a place that is so miserable that even a small drop of water offers relief. He cried out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame” (vs. 24). Can you imagine being in so much pain and suffering from such heat that just one drop of water provides significant relief? This man just wanted a moment of relief in this way.

(4) It is a place where no relief is given. Not only was this man in so much agony that a drop of water appeared to offer relief; but, there would not be any relief given to him. Not even a seemingly insignificant drop of water. He would be left to suffer in this place without any kind of relief being offered to him. Abraham responded to his request for relief by saying, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented” (vs. 25).

(5) It is a place that offers no escape. We have just seen that there is no momentary escape from the torment offered in this place (not even a drop of water placed on your tongue). In fact, there is no way of escape at all – period. Abraham told the rich man that there is a “great gulf fixed” so that those in one section of the Hadean realm cannot pass to the other section (vs. 26). The only escape from this place will be when those in Hades will be brought out of Hades for Judgment – and those who failed to obey God will then go to the place of everlasting punishment (as we’ll discuss in the next lesson).

(6) It is such a horrible place that its occupants do not desire others to go there. Notice that after the rich man discovered that he could not escape from torment himself, he turned his attention to those who were still living (see verses 27-31). Notice carefully that this man realized that there was

a connection between how a person lives on earth and going into torments. He remembered his five brothers who were still living – and requested that someone go to them and warn them. However, this permission was not granted. Instead, they needed to listen to the laws God had revealed. Still, this request demonstrates his concern for others to live their lives in a way that they would not have to come to this place of torment!

A great gulf fixed

Once again, notice that Abraham revealed that there was a “great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us” (verse 26). Therefore, Jesus is absolutely clear that there is no possibility of changing sides after death. At the moment of physical death, the eternal destiny of the soul is set. At that point of death an individual will simply begin to reap what he has sown (Galatians 6:7-8).

The Hadean realm is simply never taught (in Scripture) as being a place similar to the concept of “Purgatory.” An individual who dies in sin will not be tormented for just a short time in Hades – and then saved later! Additionally, living family members and others cannot buy their dead loved ones’ souls from torment – and the living cannot be baptized for the dead and affect the condition of the soul in torment! These are only man-made ideas that present a false sense of comfort to those who believe in these doctrines. However, these ideas are entirely foreign to the Scriptures – and those who follow them will not be saved by them!

Furthermore, I also want to point out that there is no Biblical evidence that these departed souls return from the Hadean realm to this earth to complete their “unfinished business” or to “haunt” those who are living. Again notice that the rich man desired for someone to go back to warn his brothers, but this permission was not granted (verses 27-31). Those in Hades are entirely confined to the portion of Hades they find themselves in.

The Return Of Jesus Christ

Those who experience physical death prior to the return of Jesus Christ will go to this Hadean realm. They will consciously wait in this realm (either in torment or comfort) until the time of Jesus' return – when they will be brought out of Hades and will be judged (Revelation 20:11-15). However, there will also be many who are living at the time of Jesus' return. Therefore, the return of Jesus Christ is significant to both those who are living as well as to those who have died. Let's consider what the Bible teaches us concerning this event.

The certainty of Christ's coming

Before we consider what the Bible teaches concerning the events that will transpire when the Lord Jesus returns, let's simply observe the certainty of Christ's coming. First, understand that the Bible frequently uses language concerning the coming of the Lord or the Day of the Lord to refer to His judgment upon nations. For instance, you can see this language used in Matthew 24:1-35 in reference to the judgment and destruction God would bring upon Jerusalem (which was accomplished in A.D. 70). This kind of language can also be observed in the book of Revelation concerning God's judgment upon the Roman Empire.

So, you must be diligent to observe the context of each passage in order to understand what is under consideration. These are not the events that we are preparing to discuss. None of these events accomplished what God promises for the time Jesus will return in the final Judgment! The Bible clearly indicates that this Day of the Lord will come at some specific point in the future and will result in very specific things (as we'll discuss in this section).

Now, let's spend just a moment considering a few passages that promise the return of Jesus Christ.

- John 14:1-6. As Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure from the earth, He told them not to let their hearts be troubled. He wanted them to believe in Him just as they believed in God. He

promised them that there were many dwelling places in His Father's house, saying that He was going to prepare a place for them – and then He would come again and receive them to Himself so that they could be where He also was going. Then, in verse 6, Jesus indicated that He is the only way to this eternal life with the Father.

- Acts 1:9-11. This text records the Biblical account of Jesus' ascension into Heaven after He had lived on the earth for a time after His resurrection from the dead. However, as the apostles gazed into heaven, two men (probably two angels) who stood by them said, "This same Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."
- 2 Peter 3:10. The entire context of 2 Peter 3 is focused on assuring Christians that Jesus Christ will come. There had been those who were mocking the promised coming of Jesus Christ – saying that things were continuing just as they had always been. However, Peter assures everyone in this text that "the Day of the Lord will come" and everything God has promised will transpire at that time will happen.

What will happen when Jesus returns

We are continuing to watch for this return of Jesus Christ – even today. However, we are still assured by God in the Scriptures of its coming. Yet, we need to gain an accurate understanding of the things that will transpire at that time so that we can be prepared for them. Let's consider what the Bible says will take place whenever Jesus Christ returns. As we do this, we will be relying heavily upon the following passages. Please take some time to read them for yourself now (I will be mentioning them again, but we will not read them all in their entirety): Matthew 25:1-46; John 5:28-29, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, and 2 Peter 3:5-14.

(1) Jesus will come in the clouds. When Jesus ascended into Heaven, Acts 1:9 says that “a cloud received Him” out of the sight of those who were watching. Then, verse 11 identifies that Jesus will come in the same manner as these individuals saw Him go into Heaven. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says that those Christians who are living when Jesus returns will be “caught up together” with those who were dead in Christ “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

(2) The Lord will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The return of Jesus Christ will be an occasion everyone (both living and dead) will know about and will take part in. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

(3) The dead will be raised. Recall (from lesson 1) that death is likened to “sleep” (see Acts 7:60). We have also observed (in this lesson) that the Hadean realm is a temporary waiting place for those who have experienced physical death. The reason for both is because there will be a resurrection from the dead everyone will take part in. Jesus promises such in John 5:28-29. He says, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

(4) The dead in Christ will rise first. Certainly both those who have done good and those who have done evil will take part in this resurrection from the dead. However, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 provides some additional information concerning those who have died “in Jesus.” The passage says that “God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (vs. 14). Then, in verses 15-16, He says that those who are alive and remain upon the earth whenever Jesus Christ returns will not “precede those who are asleep.” Instead, Paul says that the “dead in Christ will rise first.”

(5) The living will meet the Lord in the air. I do not know how the resurrection of the dead will take place. I do not know where Hades is and where

they will come from when Jesus returns. But, I do know that the Bible says that those who are living will be “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). And, for those who are Christians, “we will always be with the Lord.”

(6) The earth will be destroyed. As Jesus returns and gathers all people (both the living and the dead), what will become of this earth we live on? 2 Peter 3:10-14 gives the answer. Verse 10 says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Note that some Greek manuscripts contain a different ending to verse 10 that say the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Both are true. As we will see in a moment, everything that mankind has done while living on earth will be judged. And, 2 Peter 3 goes on to further state that this world will be destroyed by fire. Verse 12 says that “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.” Nothing that exists on this earth will remain (see also vs. 7)!

(7) The resurrection and transformation into our spiritual bodies will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. When Paul was writing to the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 15:50-54), he told them that they would “all be changed” because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” He said that this would happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” He said that “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” saying that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Then, he goes on to picture this tremendous moment of victory for those who are Christians (Note that this resurrection is a moment of great defeat for the one who is not a Christian). Matthew 25:1-13 speaks of those who were prepared for His coming as going in with Him to the “wedding” while those who were not prepared were shut out.

(8) Judgment will take place. The Scriptures speak clearly about the promise for a final

Judgment in which Jesus Christ will Judge the world (see Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We'll be considering this Judgment in greater detail in the next lesson. For now, I want you to understand that this will take place whenever Jesus Christ returns. Matthew 25:14-30 records a parable demonstrating that Jesus Christ will return to reward/punish individuals for how they have conducted their lives while He has been gone. Then, Matthew 25:31-46 goes on to describe this great Judgment scene and identifies when it will take place. Specifically notice that verses 31-33 say that when "the Son of Man comes in His glory...He will sit on the throne of His glory" and He will separate the people from one another as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

(9) Vengeance will be taken upon those who are disobedient and eternal rest will be given to those who are faithful to Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 makes it very clear that the things which will be experienced by individuals on this Day of Christ's return will differ depending upon whether they were faithful and obedient to Jesus Christ during their lives or not. Those who have been faithful to Jesus Christ will be given rest "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." However, at this same time, vengeance will be taken on "those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ." These individuals will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

(10) Death and Hades will be destroyed. We have seen throughout the first two lessons of this study that neither death nor Hades are permanent. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says that the "last enemy that will be destroyed is death." Then, whenever Jesus comes (from the standpoint of those who have lived faithful to Him), Paul says that "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)! Jesus Christ provides the victory over these for those who faithfully serve and obey Him (1 Corinthians 15:56-58)! Also, see Revelation 20:13-14 concerning how Death and Hades are pictured as being cast into the same lake that burns with fire and brimstone as all of God's enemies are cast. This is a

great scene of victory for God over this fierce enemy of man!

(11) The Kingdom will be turned back to God. Today, Jesus Christ reigns as King over His Kingdom (the church). However, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 indicates that He will deliver His Kingdom to God (the Father) after all of the enemies have been defeated (the last of which will be death). Therefore, this too will transpire after Jesus Christ returns and the enemies of God are defeated!

Now, before moving on, I want to offer just a few concluding thoughts about these things which are promised to transpire when Jesus Christ returns. (1) This will not be a secret thing. Everyone will know that Jesus has come. (2) Everyone will be involved – both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished. (3) There will no longer be any additional opportunity to make changes to your life. (4) Jesus Christ will not set foot on this earth. Instead, He will come in the cloud and all will meet Him for Judgment. (5) This earth will be destroyed and nothing on it will remain.

What will not happen when Jesus returns

While we may not have every answer to every question concerning the return of Jesus Christ, God has given us sufficient information to reach the definitive conclusions we have been considering. In addition, we have enough information to identify some things that will not happen. Certainly, there are many things that are claimed regarding the return of Jesus Christ that we can know to be absolutely false.

(1) Jesus will not set foot on this earth again. There are some who claim that Jesus will establish His kingdom when He returns and reign over this kingdom for 1,000 years from Jerusalem. However, not only does the Bible teach that Jesus' kingdom has already been established (compare Luke 9:27 and Colossians 1:13), but the Scriptures do not teach that Jesus will set foot on this earth again. Instead, as we have seen, whenever Jesus returns, He will be in the clouds – and we will be called to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

(2) The earth will not be rejuvenated. Some claim that this earth will be rejuvenated to be

a paradise (claiming that it will be restored back to the original condition God created in Genesis 1-2). However, rather than teaching that the earth will be rejuvenated for the righteous to live on, we have seen that the Scriptures teach that this world will be destroyed – and that there will not be anyone left on earth to live (see 2 Peter 3:1-14).

(3) The righteous will not be “raptured.”

Some believe that the “rapture” will take place prior to Jesus’ return. They believe that all of the righteous will be removed from this earth. So, if two people are driving in a car together and the rapture happens (and one of those two people are part of Christ’s church), one of them will be taken suddenly and the other will be left behind. However, this is based on perversions of Scripture and man’s own suppositions. We have seen that all will take part in the resurrection and that this earth will be destroyed whenever Jesus Christ returns.

(4) A period of tribulation and Armageddon will not take place.

Some believe that there will be a period of tribulation and a great battle between Christ’s army and Satan’s army (known as the Battle of Armageddon) prior to the end of the world. Much of this belief comes from a misinterpretation of the symbolism in the book of Revelation. Many people will interpret the signs and symbols used throughout the book of Revelation literally and interpret the book in such a way so as to apply to events still in the future. However, this method of interpreting the book of Revelation is full of error and causes the Bible to contradict itself. For instance, the passages we have seen throughout this section demonstrate that the Day of Judgment will come at the same time for everyone (both the righteous and the wicked) and that this world will be destroyed when Jesus comes. There is no time or opportunity for a period of tribulation or a battle called “Armageddon” on earth.

There are certainly many different false ideas man has invented concerning the return of Jesus Christ. However, all of these fail to diligently and accurately interpret the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). Instead, these views cause Scriptures to contradict each other and result from misapplying passages. We have seen the plain teaching of Scripture concerning

the return of Jesus Christ – and we must simply hold fast to it!

When will Jesus return?

We have seen that Jesus has promised to come – and the things we are told will happen whenever He does come. But, when will all of this take place? Have we even been given any idea when these things will be? Let’s evaluate.

First, let’s begin by simply observing that Jesus’ return is still in the future. There are some who say that Jesus returned for the final time in A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed. However, while the judgment upon the nation of Israel did come in A.D. 70 (when God used the Romans to destroy the city of Jerusalem – as promised in Matthew 23:37-24:35), the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, simply does not fulfill the passages that we have considered previously! There is, indeed, a Day of the Lord still in the future – a final Day of Judgment for the entire world! This is what Jesus begins to discuss in Matthew 24:36 through chapter 25 (notice the clear transition in Matthew 24:36).

Second, there are many who teach that there are signs of Christ’s final coming. Those who make this claim are often guilty of failing to rightly divide the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). They frequently misuse Matthew 24:1-35 to teach that this identifies some “signs” which will take place just prior to Christ’s coming. However, this passage actually identifies signs that Jesus said would take place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Notice carefully that Jesus says these things would take place before that generation would pass away (Matthew 24:34-35). Then, it is not until verse 36 that Jesus begins talking about His return to bring about the final Judgment and destruction of the world. Also note that there are some who misinterpret the “last days” to refer to the time just prior to Jesus’ return (i.e. 2 Timothy 3:1-9) – and conclude that the time is now near. However, the Bible teaches that the “last days” began in Acts chapter 2 (see Acts 2:16-17) and continues until the final return of Jesus Christ. This is truly the last period of time for mankind to live on this earth. But, we are not told how long this period of time (the Gospel Age) will last.

What does the Bible teach us concerning when this final coming will take place? Consider two basic facts.

(1) It is unknown to everyone besides the Father. Jesus said, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matthew 24:36). When Jesus lived on this earth, He indicated that He did not even know when He would return – only the Father. Certainly, then, there is no one on this earth who has any knowledge of the specific time when Jesus will return!

(2) It will be like a thief. Read Matthew 24:37-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4, and 2 Peter 3:10 to see Jesus’ return being compared to a thief. Most people will not be prepared for His coming – just as homeowners are usually caught unprepared for a thief. Therefore, most people will be conducting their lives according to their own desires rather than being found ready for Jesus’ return. However, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 demonstrates that God’s people will not be caught unprepared. Not because they have special information about the date and time of Jesus’ return; but, because they are always watching and always preparing – as Jesus instructed in Matthew 24:44!

Why has Jesus not yet come?

Why have so many years passed from the time Jesus promised His return to now, without returning? This was the reason some mocked, according to 2 Peter 3:4. However, Peter said that they forgot some things. (1) They forgot that God’s word never fails, as evidenced by the destruction of the world in the days of Noah (2 Peter 3:5-6). It is by the same word of God that the heavens and earth are now reserved for fire (2 Peter 3:7). (2) They forgot that God’s time is different than our time (2 Peter 3:8). (3) They forgot that God is not slack regarding His promise (2 Peter 3:9).

So, God has not forgotten and did not lie in promising the return of Christ. Instead, Peter says that God is being “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). The reason God has not sent His Son to destroy this world and usher in the Judgment Day is because God wants everyone

to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) – and He is giving individuals the opportunity to repent. However, God’s patience will end one day (“the Day of the Lord will come,” 2 Peter 3:10). We must be ready for that great Day (Matthew 24:44; Matthew 25:1-13)!

Conclusion

I am sure that we have not exhausted everything that could be said about Hades and the return of Jesus Christ. However, I hope that the things that have been said have been beneficial to you. First, we have established that Hades is the temporary dwelling place of those who have died physically – both the righteous and the wicked (though they exist in different sections of Hades). Second, we have established that Jesus Christ will return – and what the Bible teaches will take place when this happens. We will continue to build upon our understanding of what happens after death in our next lesson. Specifically, we will focus on the final Judgment and eternity.

What was established in the first lesson?

Study Questions

1. Hades

What is “Hades”?

List some impressions from Luke 16:19-31. Is this a parable? Is there consciousness in Hades?

Describe “Paradise.”

Describe “Torments.”

What is the significance of the “great gulf” that is “fixed”?

2. The Return Of Christ

Will Christ return? How do you know?

What will happen when Jesus returns?

What will not happen when Jesus returns?

When will Jesus return? Has it already taken place?
Are there any signs?

Why hasn't it happened yet?

***Summarize what you have learned in this study.**