

Two Things Before The Final Judgment

by Wayne Goff

Frequently I am asked why the human spirit must be sent to “Paradise” or “Torments” before going to heaven or hell. They view the realm called “Hades” (place of disembodied spirits) as a temporary heaven or hell. What’s the point of all this? Let me answer it by saying two things must happen before one enters his eternal destination.

Resurrection Of The Body

The physical body does not exist in the Hadean realm. It goes to the grave and decays. James wrote *“For as the body without the spirit is dead,...”* (2:26). The spirit returns to God who gave it, and is placed in Hades for the time being.

When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, His spirit also went to Hades (Acts 2:27, 31). His body remained in the grave for three days but was not allowed to *“see corruption”* (Acts 2:27, 31). God raised up Jesus from the dead on the third day (Matt. 28:1ff), and His spirit left Hades and entered His revived physical body. This is what is meant by *“resurrection.”*

Paul tells us that Christians have hope of the same resurrection: *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,”* 1 Corinthians 15:20. Jesus was not the *first* one to be raised up from the dead, but He **was** the first one to be raised up from the dead *never to die again!*

So before our eternal spirits can enter heaven forever, they must be reunited with their resurrected bodies at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Only then will death have been defeated by the power of God (see 1 Cor. 15:54).

The resurrection — reuniting of spirit with body — takes place when Jesus comes the second time. Paul explains that our physical body will be raised and changed instantaneously: *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep (die, wg), but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,”* (1 Cor. 15:51–53). Then everyone will be ready to meet God in judgment.

Judgment Day

According to Luke 16, the Hadean realm is comprised of **a good place** (*“Abraham’s bosom,”* v. 22) and a bad place (*“torments,”* v. 23). There is a “great gulf” (v. 26) fixed between the two places so that nobody can go from one to the other. Once a human being dies, his spirit is immediately transferred to one of the two places in Hades, where it awaits the second coming of Christ and the Judgment Day.

The eternal fate of these spirits is sealed, but God grants a Judgment Day for “sentencing.” *“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works,”* Revelation 20:13.

God will judge each one’s life, without partiality or respect of persons (Romans 2:2-11). The only ones who will go to heaven are the “saved” (Mark 16:16) — those who have obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ and had their sins washed away in His blood in the waters of baptism (Romans 6:3-4). Their sins will be remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12). Eternal life will be God’s “gift” to the humble, obedient ones (Romans 6:23).

Conclusion

Hopefully this helps us all to understand a little better why one does not go *directly* to heaven at death. Those who are *“asleep in Jesus”* (1 Thess. 4:13-14) are comforted. There is no need for us to worry about them. Those who are eternally lost are now in “torment” and there is nothing that can be done to help them.