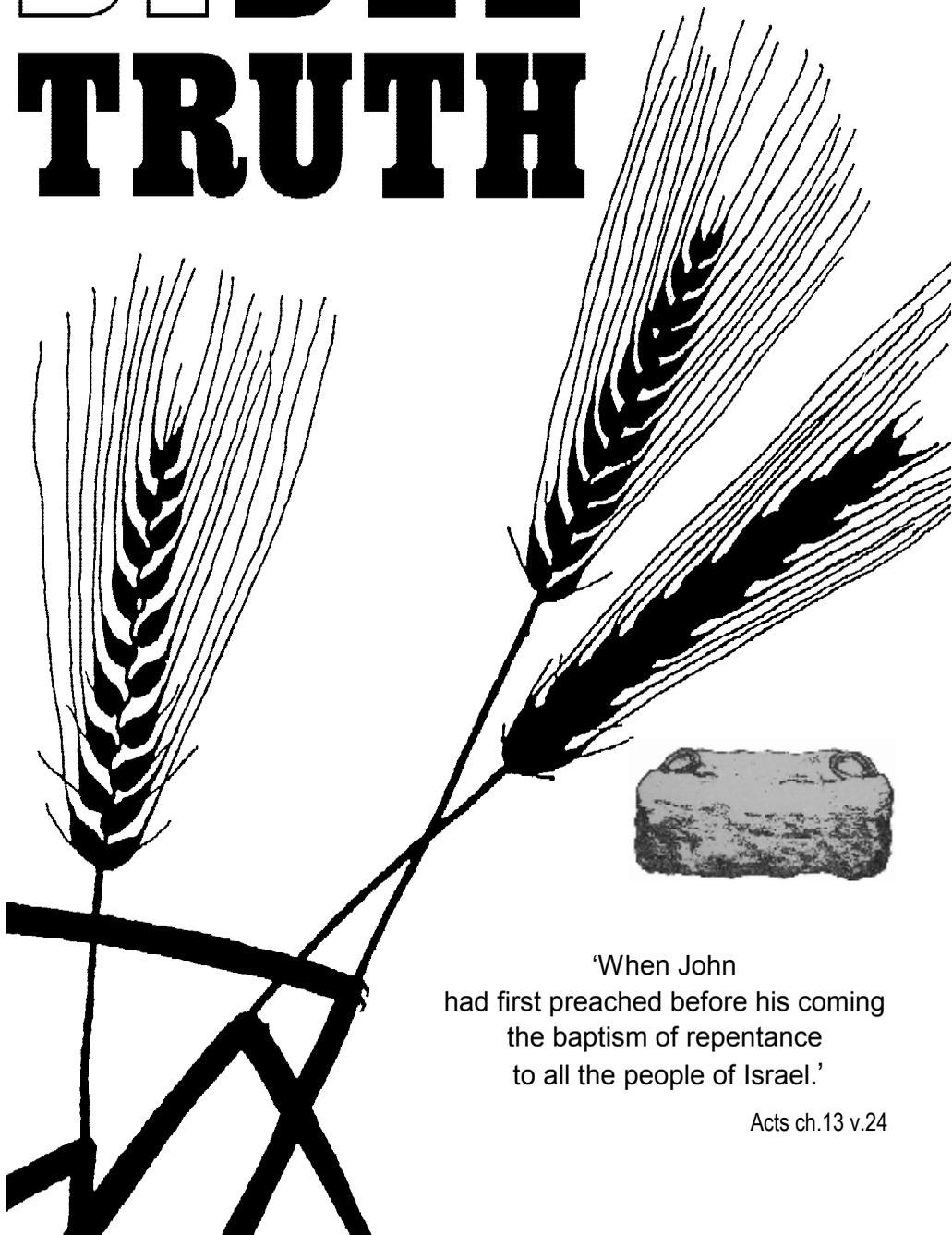


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'When John
had first preached before his coming
the baptism of repentance
to all the people of Israel.'

Acts ch.13 v.24

CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL

by Llewelyn Jones

'... thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, ...'

(Acts ch.2 v.27).

The words '... thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption'¹ are a quotation from one of David's Psalms². The apostle Peter stated that those words refer to the resurrection of Christ³. They show that Christ's soul would enter hell, but not remain there, and that His body would not decay, for His flesh would not 'see corruption'. This came to pass. David '... fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption'⁴, but God '... raised up Jesus again; ...'⁵. Jesus '... whom God raised again, saw no corruption'⁶.

When a man dies, his soul is separated from his body. The Lord Jesus Christ died, and His soul descended to hell. But His body was buried⁷, in a tomb which had been '... hewn out in the rock: ...'⁸. As had been predicted centuries earlier '... he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; ...'⁹. When Christ was raised from the dead, His soul came out of hell, and his body came out of the grave.

SHEOL, HADES, GEHENNAH AND TARTARUS

In the *Authorised Version* of the Holy Bible, the English noun 'hell' is used to translate one Hebrew noun SHEOL, and two Greek nouns HADES and GEENNA (Gehennah). In the *Authorised Version* of the Holy Bible SHEOL is translated 'hell' thirty one times, 'grave' thirty one times, and 'pit' once. The bodies of righteous men and of unrighteous men have been placed in graves.

¹ Acts ch.2 v.27

² Psalm 16 v.10

³ Acts ch.2 v.31

⁴ Acts ch.13 v.36

⁵ Acts ch.13 v. 33

⁶ Acts ch.13 v.37

⁷ 1 Corinthians ch.15 v.4

⁸ Matthew ch.27 vv 57-61

⁹ Isaiah ch.53 v.9

It can be concluded from the way in which the word SHEOL is used in Scripture, that it describes the place where the dead went in Old Testament times. In the quotation ‘... thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ...’¹⁰, in the Greek New Testament, the Hebrew noun SHEOL is translated with the Greek noun HADES. From this it can be concluded that the word HADES describes the place, where righteous and unrighteous men went, when they died, in Old Testament times. In the *Authorised Version* of the Holy Bible HADES is translated ‘hell’ ten times, and ‘grave’ once¹¹.

In the *Authorised Version* of the Holy Bible the Greek noun GEENNA is translated ‘hell’ nine times, and ‘hell fire’ three times¹². The Greek noun GEENNA is translated ‘hell’ in the following quotations from the New Testament ‘... it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell’¹³, ‘... rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell’¹⁴, ‘... how can ye escape the damnation of hell?’¹⁵. These quotations show that GEENNA is an awful place.

In the statement ‘... God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell ...’¹⁶, the words ‘cast ... down to hell’ are a translation of the Greek verb TARTAROO. In Robert Young's *Analytical Concordance To The Holy Bible*, the meaning of TARTAROO is given as ‘To put in tarta’.

To some members of the human race the Lord Jesus Christ will say ‘... Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels’. This indicates that unrighteous men, and the angels that sinned will go into this everlasting fire. John wrote that ‘the devil ... was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone’ and ‘whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire’¹⁷. It seems reasonable to conclude that GEENNA is the same place as the lake of fire.

¹⁰ Psalm 16 v.10

Acts ch.2 v.27

¹¹ 1 Corinthians ch.15 v.55

¹² Matthew ch.5 v.22, ch.18 v.9 &
Mark ch. 9 v.47

¹³ Matthew ch. 5 v.30

¹⁴ Matthew ch. 10 v. 28

¹⁵ Matthew ch. 23 v.33

¹⁶ 2 Peter ch.2 v.4

¹⁷ Revelation ch.20 vv 10 & 15

¹⁸ Revelation ch. 21 v.8

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about a rich man who ‘... died, and was buried ...’ who ‘... in hell (HADES) ...’ was ‘... in torments ...’ in a ‘place of torment’¹⁸. He also spoke about a beggar named Lazarus, who when he died ‘... was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom ...’¹⁹. The rich man in HADES was able to have a conversation with Abraham²⁰. There was ‘... a great gulf fixed ...’ between where the rich man was, and where Abraham and Lazarus were. No one could pass from the one place to the other²¹. From what the Lord Jesus Christ said about the rich man, Lazarus and Abraham, it can be concluded, that, at the time when He spoke about them, there were two separate parts of HADES, and that the souls of righteous men, who had died, were in one part, and that the souls of unrighteous men, who had died, were in the other part.

When the king of Babylon went down to SHEOL, some of those who were there said to him ‘... art thou become like unto us?’²². The Prophet Ezekiel made mention of people speaking ‘... out of the midst of hell (SHEOL)’²³.

The words ‘... thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, (HADES) ...’²⁴, indicate that when Christ died, His soul entered HADES. It is nowhere stated that His soul entered GEENNA or TARTARUS. Which part of HADES did Christ's soul enter? The Lord Jesus Christ is ‘... Jesus Christ the righteous:’²⁵. Would the Righteous One enter the place where the unrighteous dead were? On the cross, Christ said to the Father ‘... Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: ...’²⁶. Does being in the hands of the Father suggest that Christ's soul entered into that part of HADES where the souls of the unrighteous dead were? While he was in HADES, Lazarus was comforted²⁷. Who comforted him? Was he comforted there by ‘... the God of all comfort;’²⁸? David, who was a believer, said to God ‘... if I make my bed in hell (SHEOL), behold, thou art there’²⁹. SHEOL and HADES are the names of the same place³⁰. Was it necessary for Christ to suffer after He died? On the cross He said ‘...It is finished: ...’³¹.

¹⁸ Luke ch.16 vv 22-23
& 28

¹⁹ Luke ch. 16 vv 20-22

²⁰ Luke ch. 16 vv 23-31

²¹ Luke ch. 16 v. 26

²² Isaiah ch.14 vv 4-10

²³ Ezekiel ch. 32 v.21

²⁴ Acts ch.2 v. 27

²⁵ 1 John ch. 2 v.1

²⁶ Luke ch. 23 v.46

²⁷ Luke ch. 16 v. 25

²⁸ 2 Corinthians ch.1 v.3

²⁹ Psalm 139 v.8

³⁰ Psalm 16 v.10,
Acts ch.2 v.27

³¹ John ch.19 v.30

WHERE IS HADES?

In the following phrases found in Scripture, the noun 'hell' is a translation of the Hebrew noun SHEOL.

Thus when a man went to SHEOL, he went down. In the following phrase found in the New Testament, the noun 'hell' is a translation of the Greek noun HADES, '... down to hell: ...'³².

So people who went to HADES went down. The soul of Christ went down to HADES. Some time before His descent into HADES, the Lord Jesus Christ said, that the Son of man would be '... three days and three nights in the heart of the earth ...'³³. Of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul wrote 'Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?'³⁴. The tomb '... hewn out in the rock: ...' in which the body of Christ was laid³⁵, was not in '... the lower parts of the earth'³⁶. The soul of Christ went down to HADES. The soul of Christ went down to '... the heart of the earth'³⁷. Christ's soul went down to '... the lower parts of the earth'³⁸.

Paul wrote 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth'³⁹.

'... the lowest hell ...'	Deuteronomy ch.32 v.22, Psalm 86 v.13
'... down quick into hell ...'	Psalm 55 v.15
'... the depths of hell.'	Proverbs ch.9 v.18
'... hell beneath.'	Proverbs ch.15 v.24
'... down to hell ...'	Isaiah ch.14 v.15, Ezekiel ch.31 v.16 Ezekiel ch.32 v.27
'... down into hell ...'	Ezekiel ch.31 v.17
'... dig into hell ...'	Amos ch.9 v.2

A GREAT CHANGE

In Old Testament times, when righteous men died, their bodies were put into graves, but their souls went down to SHEOL. For centuries now, when people who are '... the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus'⁴⁰, have died, their bodies have been placed in graves, but their souls have gone to be with Christ.

³² Matthew ch.11 v.23 & Luke ch.10 v.15

³⁵ Matthew ch.27 v.60
³⁶ Ephesians ch. 4 v. 9

³⁸ Ephesians ch.4 v.9

³⁹ Philippians ch. 2 v.10

³³ Matthew ch. 12 v. 40

³⁷ Matthew ch.12 v.40

⁴⁰ Galatians ch. 3 v. 26

³⁴ Ephesians ch. 4 v.9

Paul wrote that he had ‘... a desire to depart, and to be with Christ⁴¹. In a letter to people whom God had ‘... called unto the fellowship of his Son ...’ the Lord Jesus Christ⁴², Paul wrote ‘We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord⁴³. When Stephen was being stoned he said ‘... Lord Jesus, receive my spirit⁴⁴. The soul of Christ has come up from HADES, and His body came out of the tomb. Jesus Christ ‘... is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; ...⁴⁵. Christ has ‘... ascended up on high, ...⁴⁶. Christ who descended ‘... into the lower parts of the earth’ has ‘... ascended up far above all heavens, ...⁴⁷. Jesus, who was ‘... three days and three nights in the heart of the earth ...⁴⁸, was ‘... taken up ... into heaven ...⁴⁹. In Old Testament times, when saints died, their souls went down to SHEOL. Now, when saints die, their souls do not go down to HADES, but go up to heaven to be with Christ.

For centuries people who have come to ‘... Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant ...,’ have come to ‘... mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ... To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, ... and to the spirits of just men made perfect,⁵⁰. Centuries ago Jesus was ‘... taken up ... into heaven, ...⁵¹. Christ is the king mentioned in the statement ‘Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion⁵². Abraham ‘... looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God⁵³. The ‘... city of the living God ...’ is ‘... the heavenly Jerusalem, ...⁵⁴. In an epistle to people who were ‘... all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus⁵⁵. Paul wrote ‘... Jerusalem which is above ... is the mother of us all⁵⁶. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob desired ‘... a better country, that is, an heavenly: ...⁵⁷. The Lord Jesus Christ said ‘... many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven⁵⁸.

⁴¹ Philippians ch.1 v.23

⁴² 1 Corinthians ch.1 v.9

⁴³ 2 Corinthians ch.5 v.8

⁴⁴ Acts ch.7 v. 59

⁴⁵ 1 Peter ch. 3 v.22

⁴⁶ Ephesians ch. 4 v.8

⁴⁷ Ephesians ch. 4 vv

9-10

⁴⁸ Matthew ch.12 v.40

⁴⁹ Acts ch.1 v.11

⁵⁰ Hebrews ch.12 v.24
& vv 21-22

⁵¹ Acts ch.1 v.11

⁵² Psalm 2 v.6

⁵³ Hebrews ch. 11 v. 10

⁵⁴ Hebrews ch.12 v. 22

⁵⁵ Galatians ch. 3 v.26

⁵⁶ Galatians ch. 4 v. 26

⁵⁷ Hebrews

ch.11 vv 9-16

⁵⁸ Matthew ch. 8 v.11

For centuries people who have had ‘... faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,⁵⁹ have been made to ‘... sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:⁶⁰ People with such a faith have become members of the church, which is the body of Christ⁶¹, which Christ described as ‘my church’ when He said ‘... I will build my church; ...⁶². There is but one church, which Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself ⁶³. ‘There is one body, ...⁶⁴. It was the purpose of God that Israelitish saints and Gentile saints ‘... should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, ...⁶⁵ Just men are men who have been ‘... justified by faith, ...⁶⁶. Abraham was justified by faith⁶⁷, so was Noah who ‘... was a just man ...⁶⁸ and so was ‘... righteous Abel ...⁶⁹. There were also many other righteous men who lived on earth in Old Testament times. Many people have been justified by faith since the time when Christ lived upon the earth. God is ‘... the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus⁷⁰. When the words ‘... the spirits of just men made perfect,⁷¹ are considered in their immediate context, and the contents of other verses mentioned in this paragraph are taken into account, it can be concluded that they refer to the souls of all the righteous men who have died, and that their souls are now in heaven with Christ. It can be concluded, that, all the souls of the righteous who were in SHEOL are now in heaven. It can be concluded, that, all of the souls of the righteous who were in HADES are now in heaven.

When did the souls of the righteous, who had died, go from HADES to heaven? Did this take place when Christ died? By His death Christ destroyed ‘... him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;...⁷². By His death Christ ‘... spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them ...⁷³. On the Cross Christ said ‘... It is finished: ...⁷⁴. When Christ went down to HADES, He went down in triumph as a conqueror. Would it have been appropriate for the souls of the righteous, who had died, to leave HADES while the soul of Christ was still there? When Christ rose from the dead, His soul left HADES, and His body came out of the tomb.

⁵⁹ Ephesians ch.1 v.15

⁶⁰ Ephesians ch. 2 v.6

⁶¹ Colossians ch.1 v.24

⁶² Matthew ch.16 v.18

⁶³ Ephesians ch.5 v.25

⁶⁴ Ephesians ch.4 v.4

⁶⁵ Ephesians ch.3 v.6

& ch.2 vv 11-22

⁶⁶ Romans ch.5 v.1

⁶⁷ Romans ch.4 vv 1-25

⁶⁸ Genesis ch.6 v.9

⁶⁹ Matthew ch.23 v.35

⁷⁰ Romans ch.3 v.26

⁷¹ Hebrews ch.12 v.23

⁷² Hebrews ch.2 v.14

⁷³ Colossians ch.2 v.14

⁷⁴ John ch.19 v.30

To king Agrippa, Paul said ‘...I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead...’⁷⁵. Paul wrote of Christ ‘... he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence’⁷⁶.

When Christ ‘... yielded up the ghost. ... the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many’⁷⁷. The souls of these saints had been in HADES. These saints ‘... came out of the graves ...’ after the resurrection of Christ. We are not told how soon after the resurrection of Christ this happened. But it happened after the soul of Christ came up from HADES, and after His body came out of the tomb. Can it be concluded from this that the souls of the righteous, who had died, came out of HADES sometime after the resurrection of Christ?

God said to Job ‘Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? ...’⁷⁸. After His ascension Christ said ‘I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (HADES) and of death’⁷⁹. He also said ‘...These things saith ... he that openeth, and no man shutteth’⁸⁰. Did Christ open the gates of HADES, so that the souls of the righteous, who had died, could be released and ascend to heaven? When He was living upon earth, the Lord Jesus Christ said ‘...I will build my church; and the gates of hell (HADES) shall not prevail against it’⁸¹.

On the day when Christ's soul came up from HADES and His body came out of the tomb, Christ said to Mary Magdalene ‘... Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: ...’⁸².

⁷⁵ Acts ch.26 vv 22-23

⁷⁶ Colossians ch.1 v.18

⁷⁷ Matthew ch.27 vv 50-53

⁷⁸ Job ch.38 v.17

⁷⁹ Revelation ch.1 v.18

⁸⁰ Revelation ch.3 v.7

⁸¹ Matthew ch.16 v.18

⁸² John ch.20 v.17

Later that day, when the eleven and others were gathered together ‘... Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, ...’. He said to them ‘... handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have’⁸³. Did anything significant happen to the souls of the righteous, who had died, between the time when Christ said to Mary Magdalene ‘... Touch me not, ...’⁸⁴, and the time when He said to His disciples ‘... handle me ...’⁸⁵?

When Christ died His soul went down to HADES, and His body was placed in a tomb. But death could not hold Him⁸⁶. HADES could not detain Him. The tomb had to let His body go. Christ triumphed over the devil, death, HADES and the tomb. When Christ ‘... ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, ...’⁸⁷. ‘... Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him’⁸⁸. Christ who descended ‘... into the lower parts of the earth ...’ has ‘... ascended up far above all heavens’⁸⁹. Christ who ‘... loved the church, and gave himself for it;’⁹⁰ ‘... ever liveth to make intercession ...’ for those ‘... that come unto God by him...’ and He is able to save them completely from sin and all its consequences⁹¹.

When He was upon earth the Lord Jesus Christ said

‘... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die’⁹².

In a letter to people who had been ‘...called to be saints...’⁹³ and ‘...justified by faith...’⁹⁴, the Apostle Paul stated,

‘... the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’⁹⁵.

⁸³ Luke ch.24 vv 33,36 & 39

⁸⁴ John ch.20 v.17

⁸⁵ Luke ch.24 v.39

⁸⁶ Acts ch.2 v.24

⁸⁷ Ephesians ch.4 v.8

⁸⁸ Romans ch.6 v.9

⁸⁹ Ephesians ch.4 vv 9-10

⁹⁰ Ephesians ch.5 v.25

⁹¹ Hebrews ch.7 v.25

⁹² John ch.11 vv 25-26

⁹³ Romans ch.1 v.7

⁹⁴ Romans ch.5 v.1

⁹⁵ Romans ch.6 v.23