

Death Is Cast Into the Lake of Fire – Revelation 20:14

by Ted Gatz

Revelation 20:14 poses an interesting question: “*Why is it that death, along with Hades, is cast into the lake of fire?*” To most people, death is simply a part of life. A time when we cease to exist and are committed to the grave. But what spiritual significance does this have, and how can death be destroyed? To answer this, we must understand death; how it originated, what it does to mankind, and the implications it has with God.

What Is Hades?

Hades is a realm of departed spirits that is vividly portrayed in Luke 16:19–31. It serves as the temporary place for all souls who have departed their bodies upon death. Hades, separated by an impenetrable boundary, separates the righteous from the unrighteous. The righteous find peace in “Paradise,” while the unrighteous are condemned to “Tartarus” or “Torment” (2 Peter 2:4).

Paradise is not Heaven, the eternal dwelling place of God, but a place of comfort and peace within Hades. Paul describes this distinction in 2 Corinthians 12:1–6, where he says, speaking metaphorically of himself, that he was caught up “*to the third heaven*” and “*into paradise*.” The Greek word translated “*into*” indicates that he actually entered paradise, while the Greek word for “*to*” indicates that he approached Heaven itself without entry.

Hades is an unseen world and we do not know where it is in relation to Heaven. We do know from Paul’s statement that Paradise is within sight of Heaven. When the day of judgment comes, Hades will be cast away and destroyed, no longer needed for the work of God.

What Is Death?

When we look at death and Hades, we see a connection between the two. James tells us that death is the separation of the body and the spirit (Jms. 2:26). James is not referring to the breath of life, but to the residing spirit of man, which lives even though the body does not. Job says, “*But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding*” (Job 32:8). Understanding is our rational capacity, our moral and spiritual nature, and our ability to be in relationship with God. This is what separates us from the animal world.

Zechariah said that it is God who “*forms the spirit of man within him*” (Zech. 12:1), while Solomon said that at death, “*The spirit returns unto God who gave it*” (Eccl. 12:7).

When a person dies, the soul returns to God, and at that time we find ourselves in Hades, the place of departed spirits (Luke 16:19–31). The purpose of Hades is to keep our spirits for God until the final judgment. When the final judgment occurs, Hades will yield up those spirits to God and no one will be left in this place (Rev. 20:13). This shows us that God has complete authority over man’s eternal spirit.

Was Death Designed as Part of The Creation?

Death was not designed by God as part of His creation. On the seventh day, God saw that “*everything was good*” (Gen. 1:31). When humanity was created, mankind was in communion with God and even had access to the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9). This suggests to us that man could have possessed immortality through a right relationship with God. However, this relationship changed dramatically when Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree.

God had warned that death would result if they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Whether that death was spiritual, physical, or both may be debated, but what we do know is that it separated mankind from God. While obedience is life for man, disobedience brings death. As part of man’s punishment, God told Adam, “*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground; for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return*” (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12).

From this, we understand that at some point in life our souls will be separated from our physical bodies and return to God. He will keep our souls in Hades until the day of judgment while our bodies return to the ground.

How Did Death Originate?

Death did not originate with the Creator. It is the work of Satan. When Adam and Eve fell to the serpent’s temptation, they transgressed God’s law, and transgression is sin (1 John 3:4). Through his transgression, death entered the world, and passed onto all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12). Satan is its master and holds the power of death over man (Heb. 2:14). Satan held this power until Christ conquered him by His resurrection proving His power over death and the grave (1 Cor. 15:54–57).

Death did not originate from God, it is the enemy of God. Death’s goal was to enslave humanity in the grave and destroy God’s plan of redemption. Without the resurrection of Christ we would still be in our sins and we would perish, both physically and spiritually (1 Cor. 15:16-19). That is why Paul refers to it as “the last enemy” (1 Cor. 15:26).

What Does the Destruction of Death Imply?

Death has already been conquered by the resurrection of Christ; all that remains is for it to be destroyed. Paul calls death an enemy when he said, “*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*” (1 Cor. 15:26). Death may be conquered, but it is still active, enslaving the unrighteous with no hope. However death cannot keep the righteous from God. What has been taken away from the power of Satan, is his hold over the grave. This was accomplished by the resurrection of Christ. Because He was resurrected, we shall also be resurrected (Jn. 5:25-29). Death and the grave will not hold us captive.

To show His complete dominion over Satan, God will destroy the reign of death that Satan has over humanity. What power or authority that Satan has will be stripped from him. He and all of

his fallen angels will have their fate sealed on the day of judgment (2 Pet. 2:4). With the destruction of death, God will be victorious over all of his enemies.

The Final Moments for Death and Hades

On the day of judgment, God will bring His great and glorious plan of redemption to its conclusion. He will demonstrate His great power over His enemies and His great love for those who have placed their obedient faith in Him. He will cast the last enemy, death, into the lake of fire, along with Hades and all those whose names are not found in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:14). The righteous will live and be with the Lord forever Phil (1:21, 23).

What Has Death Done for Mankind?

The introduction of death into the world has had a profound impact on humanity. Both negatively and positively.

- Death introduced separation from God (Isa. 59:2).
- Death made humanity mortal (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12).
- Death placed all humanity under bondage (Heb. 2:15).
- Death established a universal appointment for judgment (Heb. 9:27).

While there are negative effects of death, there are also positive ones.

- Death became the doorway to eternity (Phil. 1:21, 23; Eccl. 12:7).
- Death causes people to seek God and His wisdom: *“Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”* (Ps. 90:12).
- Death forces people to consider eternity and moral accountability. The house of mourning teaches the living to reflect on their destiny (Eccl. 7:2).
- Death teaches us to respect God through faithful obedience. (Rev. 2:10)

In Conclusion

Seeing the temporal nature of our bodies and the eternal life of our spirits, let us seek after God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Finally, like Paul, with our confidence in God's power over death we can confidently say: *“To die is gain... to depart and be with Christ is far better”* (Phil. 1:21, 23).