

# The Trip to the Afterlife

Doug Hamilton

## Summary from First Two Lessons

So far in this series, we examined the foundational teaching that we are triune, just like the Trinity, being body, soul and spirit (1Thessalonians 5:23). Our body is temporary, the soul is eternal and the spirit is the spirit of life which is what brings our soul life (Genesis 2:7). Additionally, when we die, our soul becomes disembodied and goes to the location referred to in the Bible as *Hades*. There are two sides to *Hades*, *Paradise* and *Tartarus*, being the location of the saved and lost respectively. In this lesson, we will focus on the permanency at this stage in the afterlife.

## Part 3: Hades

Though we have already entered a discussion of Hades, which is the first stop to eternity, there is a major understanding which must be discussed concerning the topic. How permanent is the state of Hades once entered.

### Can one switch sides in Hades once entered?

For centuries, even before Christ, there were practices of purification for the dead. The hope in each was to potentially sway God in the afterlife in Hades, allowing those in condemned *Tartarus* to cross over in *Paradise*. This was all carried out through the process of chasm-hijacking.

Jesus revealed His personal belief on the topic in the parable of Rich Man and Lazarus. *Luke 16:26*, “*And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.*” In *Hades*, there is an impassible chasm separating the lost from the saved. This is what was the accepted teaching in Jesus’ day concerning the afterlife. This chasm, the lifeless void of great expanse, separated the saved from the lost in *Hades*. If, however, by redefining this chasm, hijacking its meaning and name, then great control and influence could empower a religious movement.

To say this was the only doctrine circulating on the topic would be an understatement. There are always people of every society and time-period who struggle to accept the teachings of the Scripture. That even included people of Jesus’ day, and even before.

- Prior to Christ, Chinese Buddhists made offerings for the dead, being in search of a better outcome. Offerings of food and incense could sway the eternal outcome of the deceased. They learned this from some of the Greeks during that time.
- Plato and other Greek writers recorded from nearly 400 years prior to Jesus, mentioning *celestial hades*. This teaching laid claim to the great Chasm of the dead being trapped, awaiting purification and hopefully being able to go to *Paradise* instead of *Tartarus*.
- This in turn began to seep into Jewish teachings and practices. By the time of the second-century BC, the Jews were offering prayers for the dead, attempting to change the outcome of the deceased. That was not what the Old Testament taught, but some did it anyway.
- It later crept into Christianity through manmade teachings, bearing names like *purgatory*, *limbo*, *perdition*, and *purging*. Their doctrine teaches that just as metal is purged of impurities in the smelting process, so also must a deceased person be purged from their sins in the afterlife. They reasoned if they were not, then relegation to *Tartarus* will occur. The same groups taught that by saying enough repetitive incantations, lighting enough candles, and contributing enough funds to their religious organization, the soul could be purged of enough sins that God would be swayed. This purification process would allow passage for the lost soul, switching from *Tartarus* to *Paradise*. Later on, they extended it to prepaid sin called indulgences.

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## What is the “Biblical” foundation of their argument?

As Biblical Christians, we must always ask concerning the emergence of strange doctrine, “What does the Bible say about this?” We seek biblical backing to hold to our beliefs, but simply quoting a Bible verse out of context does not justify one’s teaching. Those putting forth “purging” doctrine also throw a few Bible verses, seeking endorsement from God’s word, but falling short upon examination. Take the following three top verses for with they put forth.



- Isaiah 4:4, “When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning,”

Notice a focus on the word “purged”, which appears to be attractive to the doctrinal proponents. Those teaching this will often cite this verse to support for their redefinition of the hadean realm. The context for which this verse is actually refers to the natural purging brought forth through bad behavior. Israel became a sinful nation and God purged them through the natural consequences in this life. This has nothing to do with Hades.

- 1 Peter 1:7, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

They will often cite this verse to prop-up their teaching, drawing attention to “tested by fire”, for which is a metallurgy phrase in the smelting process. Their argument is that in purgatory, one’s faith is made pure. This is wrong on two levels. First, completely out of context, for verse 6 identifies this in the present trials they were enduring. “*In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials...*” Secondly, it does not even mention anything in regards to purgatory.

- 1 Corinthians 3:12-13, “Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.”

Once again, in an attempt to gravitate toward the “purging” terminology, this passage would be a natural attraction. Their argument claimed that following a death, the deceased would pass through a purging process, leading to the ability to be transferred into Paradise.

This does not align with the context of the verse. In the prior text, verse 11, it referred to the expected foundation of every Christian, which is the gospel, not works. “*For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” There were those in the Corinthian church who abandoned the true gospel, basing their salvation on spiritual accomplishments, and not grace. Paul addressed this in the Ephesian church as well. *Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* Paul’s argument to the Corinthians was that we will all stand before God’s judgment seat, not on the basis of works, but of gospel grace. In this way, it “will become evident”. Jesus said in *John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”* We either trust in His grace or we do not.

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## Why was the Doctrine of Purgatory put forth?

### 1. Unhealthy Grief Support

Whenever a person loses a loved one, there is always grief which follows. If deceased did not live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27), it would naturally lead to survivor grief. Nobody likes to think about someone they love as suffering for an eternity. By offering a new teaching that loved ones could switch sides and be in Paradise, a false comfort could pacify a harsh reality.

### 2. Monetary Funding

According to the Christianity Today, there was a Pope named *Leo X* (1475-1521), who was a member of a financial household of high-living Italian family by the name of de Medicis. This man famously said “*Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it.*” He commissioned many family members to become bishops and the lived and extravagant lifestyle, draining the funds of the Catholic church. When the money to support his lifestyle ran out, he propagated a fund-raising scheme of selling forgiveness of sins, called indulgences. By convincing people to pre-pay for sins, bereaved relatives could get a deceased loved one out of Purgatory. Since purgatory was a man-made doctrine, it could be exploited by the same men.



## Hollywood Influence

Once again, Hollywood had made a fortune attempting to embed the theology of Christians. Movies like *Betelgeuse*, *Ghost*, *Gabriel* and *Ground Hog Day* all cater to a middle processing phase between life and eternal destination. Once again, that is Hollywood Bible, not Jesus Bible. Other than the fact that the Christian Scriptures do not mention purgatory or anything of the like, it actually teaches the opposite.

## Switching Sides?

There seems to be no switching sides once a person enters the Hadean world. The Bible is clear that at death comes finality concerning destination. Consider the following.

- Luke 16:26, 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and {that} none may cross over from there to us.'
- Hebrews 9:27, And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this {comes} judgment,
- Jude 1:6, And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.
- 2 Peter 2:9, “*then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment”

## Closing Thought

Jesus said in *John 3:18*, “*He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*” If one has chosen in this life to not place their belief in Jesus, then their present reservation is in Tartarus. If they do trust Jesus, then they have their present reservation in Paradise.

It always boils down to personal decision. If your reservation in the afterlife is in the condemned side, then you must change it today through the covenant which Jesus provided.