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Hades or Heaven? (Part 1 of 2)



By Dan Maines

Hades or Heaven? (Part 1 of 2)

When we die physically, Do those of us IN Christ go to Hades or Heaven? (Some call it the Spiritual Realm. I'm not going there in this post)

Most believe we go to Heaven when we die, even futurists. Futurists use 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Philipians 1:23 as their proof we go to Heaven at death. I agree with that only because I know the Second Coming already happened. Now, if it didn't happen then nobody goes to heaven apart from the resurrection. Yes, the Bible teaches that apart from the resurrection, nobody goes to heaven.

Prior to the Second Coming of Christ, believers didn't go to heaven. They went to Hades to await the resurrection from the dead. So, if Christ has not returned, then believers do not go to heaven at death.

Every serious Berean knows that the resurrection of the dead (out of Sheol/Hades) would take place on the "last day" (John 11:24)

The resurrection was the last day. So we know that the "last day" of "this age" is gone. Do we know why? because "the age to come" has no last days. The resurrection was to happen at the end of the Old Covenant age when the Lord returned. Now incase we need a quick refresher course about "Age" Let's read on.

From Matthew 12:32 - "the age about to come" was for the original audience.

From Ephesians 1:21 - Here again, we see the two ages, "this age," and "the age to come." Knowing these two ages and when they changed, will give us understanding when the dead went to heaven.

The New Testament writers lived in the age that they called "this age." To the New Testament writers, "the age to come" was future, but it was very near because "this age" was about to end.

From 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 - The rulers of "this age" crucified the Lord. And these rulers would be no more because "this age" was about to end. Now, if the Jewish age ended at the cross, why were they still ruling the age? because the temple was still standing and the Age had not yet ended. The Jewish leaders and the Old Covenant system would come to and end when Hebrews 8:13 was fulfilled as we will see.

From 1 Corinthians 10:11 - Paul said that the end of the ages was coming upon them, the first century saints. "This age", along with its wisdom and rulers, was about to end.

From 1 Peter 1:20 - Jesus came during the "last days" of the "this age" that was the Old Covenant age, the Jewish age. That age came to an end with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. So, the New Testament writers had to live in what the Bible calls "this age".

Again, "This age" of the Bible is the age of the Old Covenant that was about to pass away in the first century. It should be clear that "this age" is not the Christian age in which we live. In the first century, the age of the Old Covenant was fading away and would end completely when the temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

From Hebrews 8:13 - At this time, the Old Covenant was still in effect but it was ready to pass away. The book of Hebrews was written around 65-69 AD and in 70 AD the Old Covenant did pass away at the destruction of Jerusalem. This is when "this age" of the Bible became ancient history.

Now, what was to happen at the end of "this age"? His Return, The Resurrection and The Judgment.

His Return - 2 Timothy 4:1 - (mello: about to come) Hebrews 10:37 Did He Tarry?

Resurrection - John 11:24 The resurrection was to happen at the end of the Old Covenant age when the Lord returned.

Judgment - Matthew 13:40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of "THIS AGE".
(caps mine)

Now, If we're in the Christian age, the age to come, then the resurrection must have happened. "This Age" was the "present age" at that time. And that Age ended in 70 AD with the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Lord.

Again, since the "present age" of the Bible ended in 70 AD with the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Lord, we must be in "the age to come." And if we are in "the age to come," then the resurrection has already happened.

Now, what did Jesus say His believers would receive in the age to come. (Mark 10:29-30)? ...In the Age to Come, Eternal Life.

Please don't miss this, Prior to Jesus' messianic work, no one went to Heaven. They did not have eternal life but they had hope.

From John 3:13 - No one went to Heaven before Jesus. Everyone went to a holding place of the dead and waited for the atoning work of Christ and the resurrection from the dead. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for where they were prior to the resurrection is Sheol. In the New Testament, the Greek word is Hades. This was a waiting area for disembodied spirits.

God had promised to redeem His people from the grave. (Hosea 13:14, Psalms 49:15)

This was the hope that God will provide salvation beyond the grave, one of the Old Testament references to life after death, eternal life, and salvation from God.

Believers since 70 AD, have immortality. From 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; 52 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. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption,

and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

When Christ returned with the sound of the trumpet, the dead were raised, and the living were changed. All believers put on immortality, and death was swallowed up - no more Hades. Friends, we are no longer living in the "already but not yet" of the transition period. We are living in the New Covenant age in which righteousness dwells. We are not living in the age of "hope," we are living in the age of "we have it now." The righteousness of Christ is ours, eternal life is ours, immortality is ours. For us, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. For someone to believe that Christ has not yet returned and yet believe that Christians go to heaven when they die is to be inconsistent. Nobody goes to heaven apart from the resurrection. Luke 14:12 -13 "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Matthew 5:11-12 (NKJV) "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

"Your reward in heaven" is the same as " you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." When you are resurrected, you go to heaven, and not until. If Christ has not come and the resurrection has not happened, then all those who died in Christ are in Sheol. (Part 2 of 2 will continue tomorrow)

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