

EAST CAMBRIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“A first century church in the 21st century”

Bible Reading Plan

Week 40

- Jer 11-13; 2 Cor 12
- Jer 14-16; Ps 76; 2 Cor 13
- Jer 17-20; James 1
- Jer 21-23; Ps 77; Jam 2
- Jer 25-26, 35-36, 45;
Ps 133; Jam 3

Leading Services

Announcements: Mike V.

Morning:

Song Leader: Zack V.

Opening Prayer: Richard L.

Lord's Table: Larry L.

Asst By:

Closing Prayer: Brock G.

Evening:

Song Leader: Ron V.

Opening Prayer: Larry L.

Closing Prayer: Brock G.

Scripture Reading: Tony Y.
(Malachi 2.1-9)

Sermons

AM: The Bible Doesn't Say That



Afterlife

The comprehending of our mortality is life-altering thought. There is a time when we are young and not mindful of such burdensome thoughts as death. Then at some point, it occurs to us and, like most people, we try to ignore this reality for as long as possible.

The pursuit of faith, finds purpose in the knowledge of our eventual exit from this mortal life. In faith, we are seeking to find something more beyond. However, like most areas loosely qualified as “faith”, there are countless opinions being circulated; and with those opinions, there is confusion and worry. There are those who believe: Death is the end—there is nothing beyond this mortal life. That we are recycled into other lives—traveling from one life to another over the line of time. We go directly to Heaven (or Hell)—from here to our eternal dwelling at death. That all souls go to a waiting place—waiting for the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment.

Let's consider the information from the Scriptures to answer the question, “Where do we go from here?”.

A Temporary Holding Place, in the Old Testament: Throughout the timeline of the Scriptures, there is a continuous mention of a holding place for souls. The term often used in the Old Testament is the Hebrew “Sheol”: 2 Samuel 22:6; Job 11:8, 17:16, 26:6; Psalms 16:10, 18:5, 86:13, 116:3; Proverbs 1:12; Isaiah 5:14, 14:11; 14:15; 28:15; 28:18; 38:10; 38:18; 57:9; Jonah 2:2b.

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Where do we go from here?

This limited Old Testament information concerning “Sheol” the holding place of departed spirits seems one-sided. The inspired writers of these words seemed to make reference to “the lower pits of Sheol”, or the suffering of that place.

The Old Testament also references the good side of that “waiting place”. A “place of rest” where their ancestors awaited them. This is perhaps reference to the “good” side of Sheol. Thirty-six times the reference is made to “resting with the fathers” and is said of such notables as David, Solomon, Omri, Hezekiah, and Manasseh (1 Kings 2:10, 11:21, 11:43, 14:20, 14:31, 15:8, 15:24, 16:6, 16:28, 22:40, 22:50, as well as many references in, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles).

Perhaps, the people didn’t have a name for God’s dwelling way back then...no, they clearly did: At least 17 direct references to God’s dwelling as “Heaven”, in 10 different Old Testament Books.

A Temporary Holding Place, in the New Testament: The New Testament describes a place called “Hades”. There is an important point of reasoning to note from the Lord’s conversations about this place called Hades. When we hear Jesus speak of “Hades” in the New Testament, He does so in such a way as to infer that His audience commonly understood that place. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus very matter-of-factly mentions Hades in this statement, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Here Jesus is referencing Hades as a powerful place, but also, He is stating that His church would be able to overcome its hold (within the gates) of Hades. The fact that Jesus speaks of Hades without any further explanation or confusion among His listeners, shows us that the people commonly knew about Hades. Matthew 11:23, Matthew 16:18, and Luke 10:15 Jesus speaks of Hades as if all were familiar with the reality of that place.

The most descriptive discussion of Hades is found in Luke 16:19-31 where Jesus speaks in greater detail concerning this place called Hades. A side-point: Some have called this “a parable”, but it doesn’t fit within the parameters of a parable: Parables typically have anonymous characters, not named individuals. Parables approach their “stories” more generally, not as specifically detailed, as this record. Parables are earthly stories that convey spiritual meanings; if so, what does this record teach us other than what it proclaims by its face value?

Here is what we learn about that place in Luke 16:19-31: Hades is a place that is found after mortal death (v.22). Angels carried the soul of Lazarus to a place described as “Abraham’s Bosom” (v.22). Those in “Abraham’s bosom” received comfort (v. 25). There is also another area that is described as “torments” (v.23). The torment is true suffering-like burning in flame (v. 24). There is a fixed barrier in between those two places (v.26). In Hades there is recognition and conscious awareness (v. 23, 27-28).

“Hades”: Its Purpose and its Time: We learn from Luke 16:19-31 that both good and evil are held in this place called Hades. Its purpose is singular in nature: A place for departed souls to dwell while God’s earthly plan continues to unfold. Within Hades, there are two divisions, “paradise” and “torment”, separated by a “great gulf”.

Hades is a spiritual place, away from this earth. It is separated from this life by our mortality; we must die to enter Hades. It is not “Heaven”, according to Jesus, it is separate from God’s dwelling place. Jesus told the thief on the cross that He would be in “Paradise” that day—the good side of Hades (Luke 23:43). Jesus overcame the gates of Hades (Acts 2:27-31). After Jesus returned from Hades, He told Mary of Bethany, “Do not cling to Me, I have not yet ascended to My Father...” (John 20:17). These words clearly indicate that Hades is a different place than Heaven.

Hades currently continues, but is running out of time: Hades will be destroyed in the Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:13-14). This is why Hades is not Heaven, nor Hell, it is a temporary place.

Conclusion: According to the Scriptures Hades remains as the place for departed souls to dwell, awaiting final Judgment. When we pass from this life, according to both the Old and New Testaments, we do not go into our final destinations—no one goes from here to Heaven or Hell, yet. Hades is their place, for now.

There are two separate areas: one for the righteous and the other for the unrighteous. The side called “Paradise” or “Abraham’s bosom” is where we need to be heading. That place of comfort is prepared for the faithful. It is a place where we will know where we are, and why. The side called “torments” is prepared for those who have ignored, or refused, God. They also will know where they are, and why.

There is an incredibly important piece of information that is only found in the record of Luke 16. When “the rich man” realized his place in torment, the one thing he wanted even more than his own relief was that his family would never end up in that place (vs. 27-28). He wanted his family to do what they needed to do to be saved. Are you prepared to find God’s reward? You can begin through obedience to His will today.

- T. Sean Sullivan