



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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Volume 27
Issue 662

“Sh^eōl” & “Hadēs”

Their Meaning and Usage in the Word of God

Part 2 of 2

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

Discarding, therefore, everything outside of the Word of God, we note that,

1. The Greek word *Hadēs* occurs eleven times in the N.T. As the occurrences are so few, we shall be able to examine each passage in detail, as we were not able to do in the large number (65) of the occurrences of the Hebrew word *Sh^eōl*.
2. In the A.V. this word is rendered ten times “hell,” and once “grave” (I Corinthians 15:55). This has the marginal alternative “hell,” while in Revelation 20:13, the Text “hell” has “the grave” in the margin.
3. In the R.V., and in the *American R.V.*, every one of these passages is rendered uniformly “*hades*” without any alternative rendering in the margin.



9. 6:8, “His name ... was Death, and **Hadēs** followed after him.”

10. 20:13, “And death and **Hadēs** [A.V. marg., “or, *the grave*”] delivered up the dead.”

11. 20:14, “And death and **Hadēs** were cast into the lake of fire.”

In our examination of “*Sh^eōl*” we showed that *THE grave* (not *A grave*) was the only rendering which accurately represents the Hebrew word *Sh^eōl*. As *Hadēs* is used by the Holy Spirit as the N.T. substitute for the O.T. *Sh^eōl*, it follows that the same meaning must be given to *Hadēs* in the N.T.

Our readers will see that there is not one of the eleven passages where this may not be done, with great advantage to the elucidation of the text, and to the understanding of its meaning. Before we do this, let us note an important principle laid down in the twentieth of the “Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.”

It is not lawful ... to ... so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.

This principle is true because, as no one text *is* repugnant to another, it is clear that to explain one as being so repugnant is what cannot lawfully be done. If one passage appears to be repugnant to others, ►

We now give the complete list:

1. Matthew 11:23, “And thou, Capernaum, shalt be brought down to **Hadēs**.”
2. 16:18, “The gates of **Hadēs** shall not prevail against it.”
3. Luke 10:15, “And thou, Capernaum ... shalt be brought down to **Hadēs**.”
4. 16:23, “ And in **Hadēs**.”
5. Acts 2:27, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in **Hadēs**.”
6. 2:31, “His soul was not left in **Hadēs**.”
7. I Corinthians 15:55, “O **Hadēs** [A.V., “grave”] where is thy victory?”
8. Revelation 1:18, “I have the keys of death and of **Hadēs**.”

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then there is something amiss either as to the translation of it, or as to our understanding of it. In this case it behooves us to examine it and see *where* the fault lies. The one must be understood and explained in the light of the many; the one apparently more difficult passage must be made clear by the others which are quite plain.

If this method is not possible, then the difficult passage must be left unsolved for the present, with the prayer that God will, in His own time, bestow the needed grace and light. Yet in no case must we allow that one difficult passage to disturb all of the others which are clear, nor must we give heed for a moment to any false teaching which Tradition may have founded upon its misunderstanding or perversion of that one passage, whether through ignorance or malice.

With these preliminary observations we will consider each passage in order.

1. Matthew 11:23

And thou, Capernaum ... shall be brought down to Hadēs.

This suggests but one fact, *viz.*, the terrible judgment pronounced by our Lord against Capernaum: once a flourishing town in Palestine, but known now (in proof of the truth of this prophecy) only by a few insignificant mounds in which the ruins are actually buried.

What or where *Hadēs* is, is not stated. The word “down” is the only guide as to direction.

Isaiah 14:14-15 sheds further light, especially if we place the two passages side by side and put the words as they are in the Original:

Matthew 11:23

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to Hadēs.

Isaiah 14:14-15

I will ascend above the brightness of the clouds; yet shalt thou be brought down to Sh^eōl, to the sides of the pit.

Here *Sh^eōl* is explained by a synonym, “the sides of the pit” (Heb. *bōr*¹). This is an inspired and authoritative definition, and explains that *Sh^eōl* means the place “bored” in the earth – in other words, “the grave” – and that Capernaum was to be brought down there. Its proud and unbelieving inhabitants were buried in the grave; and its houses and buildings are now buried in ruins.

2. Matthew 16:18

On this Rock will I build my Assembly, and the gates of Hadēs shall not prevail against it.

Leaving aside the meaning of the word *ecclesia*, or “assembly,” we note that the word rendered “prevail”

1. The Heb. בּוֹר (*bōr*) is a rock-hewn sepulcher, as in Psalm 28:1; 30:3; 88:5; Isaiah 14:19. Our English “bore” is doubtless derived from it. It is rendered “cistern” 10 times; “dungeon” 20 times, “fountain” once; “well” 9 times and “pit” 42 times.



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is exceedingly strong. It means to *prevail against* or *over*; to *overcome* and *vanquish*. It occurs elsewhere only in Luke 23:23, where “the voices of them **prevailed**, and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they desired.” They “prevailed” against Pilate, but neither they nor the grave could prevail against Christ – He rose again from *Hadēs*, or *the grave*. He gained the victory over death and *Hadēs*, and His Assembly will be conquerors too. They will one day shout,

O Hadēs, where is thy victory ... Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

This victory will be in *resurrection*, and resurrection will be the great and abiding proof that *Hadēs* will not prevail against “the dead in Christ,” even as it prevailed not against Him.

The expression “the gates of *Hadēs*” is further explained by reference to Isaiah 38:10; Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13; 107:18.

3. Luke 10:15

is the parallel of Matthew 11:23.

4. Luke 16:23²

And in Hadēs he lift up his eyes.

Here we propose another punctuation, not that there is the slightest difficulty if we take the words as they stand and substitute “the grave” for “hell.”

2. [Editor:] See *The Rich Man and Lazarus* by the same author (see order form, or at www.StudyShelf.com).

It is then merely a representation of dead people speaking in *the grave*, as in Isaiah 14:9-20; and as trees are represented as speaking in the parable of Jotham (Judges 9:8-13). The punctuation, as we know, is absolutely human. In the Greek manuscripts there is no trace of any punctuation of any kind whatsoever, nor is punctuation a matter of precedent or human authority of any kind. It is entirely a matter of the particular context and of agreement with the general teaching of Scripture on the point in question.

Nor is the change we suggest made of our own imagination in order to support any theories of our own. It is adopted by the *Vulgate* translation,³ which, though not the original text, and of no authority as a Text, is yet evidence of a fact. It is punctuated in the same way by Tatian, *Diatessarōn* (A.D. 570) and Marcion (A.D. 545), as well as in the Ancient Jerusalem *Syriac Version*. The fact is that the first three words of :23 form, instead, the last three words of :22: a full stop being placed after the word *Hadēs*, while the word “and” is treated by this as meaning “also,” so that the whole sentence would read thus:

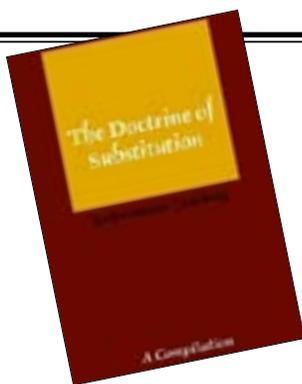
But the rich man also died, and he was buried also in Hadēs.

“Buried also” implies what is only *inferred* as to Lazarus, meaning that the one was buried as well as the other. Whether or not this punctuation⁴ is allowed does not affect the matter in the slightest degree, ►

3. *Sepultus est in Inferno*, “was buried in *Hadēs*.”

4. [Editor:] For more information on Bible punctuation and chapter/verse divisions, see:

– *Verses, Chapters, Paragraphs and Punctuation*, Eugene Charles Callaway, [Bible Student's Notebook #480](#).



The Doctrine of Substitution: An Erroneous Teaching A Compilation

This is an exposé of Christianity's erroneous doctrine of “Substitution.” Though it is widely accepted, it is not the teaching of Scripture. This is a compilation of authors, including: *A.P. Adams, Vladimir Gelesnoff, Andrew J. Jukes, A.E. Knoch*.

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for that is where *he was buried* in any case. It affects only the place where he is said to “*lift up his eyes.*”

This is further shown by the fact that the three verbs “*died,*” “*buried*” and “*lift up*” are not all in the same tense as they appear to be from the English. The first two are in the past tense, while the third is the present participle, ἐπάρας (*eparas*), “*lifting up,*” thus commencing :23 with a new thought.

Those who interpret this passage as though *Hadēs* were a place of *life* instead of *death* make it “repugnant” to every other place where the word occurs, and to many other Scriptures which are *perfectly plain*, e.g., Psalm 6:5; 31:17; 115:17; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:6, 10.

In any case, all that is material to our study here and now is the one fact that the rich man died, and he was “*buried also in Hadēs,*” i.e., “*the grave.*”

5. Acts 2:27

Thou wilt not leave my soul [i.e., me] in Hadēs.

6. Acts 2:31

His soul [i.e., He] was not left in Hadēs.

These two passages, being respectively the quotation and interpretation of Psalm 16:10, must have the meaning that *Sh^eōl* there has, and show that they speak “*of the resurrection of Christ*” (:31) from *the grave*. This is clear if we read the whole context, Acts 2:24-35, and 13:30-37. *Hadēs* is, here, the place where “*corruption*” is seen; and “*resurrection*” is the only way of exit from it.

7. I Corinthians 15:55

O Hadēs, where is thy victory.

This is translated in the A.V. “*O grave,*” which is conclusive as to the meaning to be put upon the word *Hadēs*.⁵

5. The R.V. has a Various Reading which repeats the word θάνατε (*thanate*), “*O death,*” and transposes the words “*sting*” and “*victory.*” It is, in this passage, therefore, neutral for our purpose.

Moreover, it is a quotation from Hosea 13:14, where the Hebrew is *Sh^eōl*. The four lines in this verse are arranged as an introversion, where the first line corresponds with the fourth, and the second with the third. This shows that the word in I Corinthians 15:55 must be *Hadēs* and not “*death.*”

- a | I will ransom them from the power of *Sh^eōl*;
- b | I will redeem them from **death**;
- b | O **death**, I will be thy plagues;
- a | O *Sh^eōl*, I will be thy destruction.

8. Revelation 1:18

I have the keys of Hadēs and death.

This must mean that, in virtue of Christ’s resurrection, He has henceforth the power over death and *the grave*. Satan will one day be deprived of his power over death, which he now has according to Hebrews 2:14. When John sees Christ risen, not only from the dead, but risen up from His seat (Luke 13:25) for judgment in “*the Day of the Lord*” (Revelation 1:10), he hears this wondrous proclamation of Christ’s power, as well as His intention then to put forth that power and to use it.

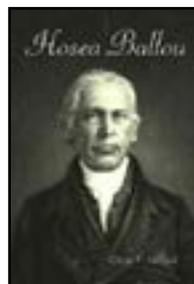
9. Revelation 6:8

His name ... was Death, and Hadēs followed with him.

The grave is that which follows after death. There, all will be buried who shall be the victims of this “*death,*” or pestilence, here foretold and personified.

10. Revelation 20:13

And death and Hadēs [marg., the grave] deliv-



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ered up the dead which were in them.

This teaches us that *Hadēs* contains, not living people, but “the dead” who “**lived not again until the thousand years were finished**” (:5). This passage is clear, and we are to explain the other ten passages so that they are not “repugnant” to it.

11. Revelation 20:14

*And death and **Hadēs** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

This verse tells of the time when *Hadēs* or *Sh^eōl*, i.e., “the grave,” will no more exist, when the prophecy of Hosea 13:14, will be fulfilled. *Hadēs* or the grave no longer will be needed, for the all-sufficient reason given in Revelation 21:4, “there shall be no more death.” Thus, for the last time, we learn what may be gathered from all of the other passages, viz., that:

1. *Hadēs* is invariably connected with *death* but never with *life*: always with *dead* people but never with the *living*. All in *Hadēs* will “NOT LIVE AGAIN” until they are raised from the dead (Revelation 20:5). If they do not “live again” until after they are raised, it is perfectly clear that they *cannot be alive now*. Language is useless for the purposes of revelation when it is made to do away with the great and fundamental doctrine of the *RESURRECTION*, which is the great fact that is being revealed;
2. The English word “hell” by no means represents the Greek *Hadēs*, as we have seen that it does not give a correct idea of its Hebrew equivalent, *Sh^eōl*.

3. *Hadēs* can mean only and exactly what *Sh^eōl* means, viz., the place where “*corruption*” is seen (Acts 2:31; cf. 13:34-37) and from which resurrection is the only exit (Revelation 20:5).

In the face of this result of our examination we may well discard all of man’s ideas, imaginations and thoughts.

We are commanded to “*search the Scriptures*” (John 5:39), and the word rendered “search” here⁶ means to *trace out* as a lion or a hound traces its prey by the trail or scent. Hence, the only way to find out the true meaning of a word is to track it and follow it in all of its occurrences, with the one object of observing and noting how the Holy Spirit of truth Himself has used it.

This is what we have now done; for, only thus can we arrive at the real meaning of a word or words with “*which the Holy Ghost teacheth*”; only thus can we be delivered from the traditions of men which make the Word of God of none effect.

(edited)

— *Things to Come*, “Sheol,” Vol. 9 (March, 1903);
“Hades,” Vol. 10 (April, 1903)

TOPICS:

Major: Bible Translations; Divine Inspiration; Hades; Hell; Sheol

Minor: Grave; Tradition

6. ἐρεύνω (*ereunaō*).



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The Absolute and the Relative

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

One principle in Scripture is very helpful in understanding many seeming contradictions. It's the distinction between "the absolute" and "the relative."



comes from clouds – is the "relative" view.

That rain comes from God is "not qualified or diminished in any way." That rain comes from clouds is a consideration of the way that we "relate" to the rain that falls.

"The absolute" is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as,

Not qualified or diminished in any way; total. ... Viewed or existing independently and not in relation to other things.

It defines "relative" as that which is,

considered in relation or in proportion to something else.

Let's consider an example of how this works. Ponder these two statements:

Rain comes from God.

Rain comes from clouds.

Now, which of these two statements is true? Well, they both are.

The first statement – that rain comes from God – is the "absolute" view. The second statement – that rain

Thus in Scripture we are told that, "the LORD sends rain upon the earth" (I Kings 17:14) and that "the clouds ... full of rain ... empty themselves upon the earth" (Ecclesiastes 11:3). The first passage speaks of the absolute, the second of the relative; the former of the divine viewpoint, the latter of the human.

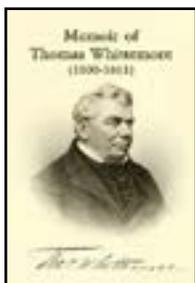
Now, let's consider two pointed examples of the absolute and relative perspectives from Scripture.

"NONE GOOD BUT ONE"

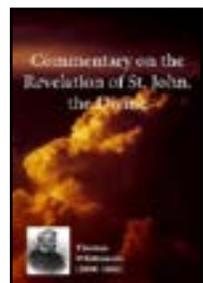
Jesus said unto him, "Why callest thou Me good? **There is none good** [ἀγαθός (*agathos*)¹] **but One, that is, God**" (Mark 10:18).

This is the *absolute* truth. There are **none** that are good, only God. He stands alone in absolute goodness.

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However, there are indeed those in Scripture who are *relatively* declared to be “good.” Let’s just cite a couple of examples.

The Scriptures declare that Joseph of Arimathaea was “*a good man* [ἀγαθός (*agathos*)], and a just” (Luke 23:50; while Joseph, the husband of Mary, was also declared to be “*just*” Matthew 1:19).

Barnabus was also “*a good man* [ἀγαθός (*agathos*)]” (Acts 11:24).

While the Scriptures declare only God to be ἀγαθός (*agathos: good*), it uses the exact same Greek word to make declarations regarding Joseph of Arimathaea and Barnabus. The absolute and the relative are how we understand these seeming contradictions.

That only God is good need not be qualified or diminished in any way. Joseph of Arimathaea and Barnabus, on the other hand, were “*good*” by *comparison* to others who were unjust.

Not only are others in Scripture also relatively spoken of in this way, but many statements exist concerning men in general as “*good*.” Consider a couple of examples.

For a good man [ἀγαθός (*agathos*)] *some would even dare to die* (Romans 5:7).

A good man [ἀγαθός (*agathos*)] *out of the good treasure of his heart ...* (Luke 6:45).

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH’S HEART

We find another example of the contrast between the absolute and the relative from the book of Exodus. The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is specifically mentioned 17 times in the space of 7 chapters. These 17 occurrences fall into three categories:

1. It’s stated as a fact that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.
2. It’s stated that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.
3. It’s stated that it was God who hardened Pharaoh’s heart.²

Let’s break down the 17 occurrences into these 3 categories:

Pharaoh’s Heart Was Hardened

1. Pharaoh’s heart is hardened (7:14).
2. Pharaoh’s heart was hardened (7:22).
3. Pharaoh’s heart was hardened (8:19).
4. The heart of Pharaoh was hardened (9:35).

2. [Editor:] For more information on “God’s Sovereignty,” see:
 - Now We are Aware [Romans 8:28], James Coram, [Bible Student’s Notebook #510](#);
 - God in Everything, William Sibthorpe, [Bible Student’s Notebook #527](#);
 - God Determines, Not Permits, Norman Grubb, [Bible Student’s Notebook #528](#);
 - What God Wills, Happens; What He Wills Not, Won’t, George Howe, [Bible Student’s Notebook #334](#);
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 - Daily Goodies book, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. April 28 – May 28 (see order form).



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Each of us must allow the objective, unchanging truth of who God has made us in the Lord Jesus Christ to transform our minds. This is the spiritual message and journey of “*I Choose.*”



Pharaoh Hardened His Own Heart

1. *Pharaoh ... hardened his heart* (8:15).
2. *Pharaoh hardened his heart* (8:32).
3. *Pharaoh ... hardened his heart* (9:34).

God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

1. *I will harden his heart* (4:21).
2. *I will harden Pharaoh's heart* (7:3).
3. *He hardened Pharaoh's heart* (7:13).
4. *The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh* (9:12).
5. *I have hardened his heart* (10:1).
6. *The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart* (10:20).
7. *The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart* (10:27).
8. *The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart* (11:10).
9. *I will harden Pharaoh's heart* (14:4).
10. *The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh* (14:8).

It's stated as a fact that Pharaoh's heart was hardened 4 times; 3 times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; 10 times that it was God Who hardened Pharaoh's heart.

The ratio is 10:3 between God hardening Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh hardening his own heart. While both are true, one is the divine-viewpoint, and the

other is the human-viewpoint. One is absolute, while the other is relative.

“FATHER”

A last quick example before we finish: my father was Clyde L. Pilkington, Sr. He was a wonderful dad. God is also my Father, and much more wonderful beyond words. I am the offspring of both: one was my progenitor, one my Creator; Clyde my “relative” father, God my “absolute” Father.

Throughout Scripture we repeatedly see both the absolute and the relative declared; both the divine viewpoint as well as the human perspective given. If we will remember this simple, yet greatly overlooked principle, we'll be amazed to find out how often it will prove helpful in clearing up many apparent difficulties in Scripture. ■

TOPICS:

Major: Absolute and Relative; Good; Sovereignty
Minor: Pharaoh's Heart

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:

- total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
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