

ARTICLE IV.

HADES AND GEHENNA.

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THE Scriptures and contemporaneous and subsequent Jewish and Christian writings, represent hades—the world of the dead, both righteous and wicked—as a “prison,” or place of confinement or detention, such as the apostle Peter speaks of in his first Epistle. And those inspired and other writings do *not* represent gehenna—the place of the wicked dead—as a “prison,” but as *worse*, a fire. The bearing of these facts on the subject of Christ preaching to “spirits in prison” is very important. They indicate that he did *not* preach to the wicked dead, else gehenna would have been named; and that he *did* preach to some of the righteous dead. For, he preached to some in “prison,” and hades was termed a prison, the part where the righteous were, being a prison of detention to them, where they remained until their resurrection, or ascension after Christ ascended to his Father.

If the foregoing statements can be established, or even made to seem probable, it will forbid the use of the two texts concerning preaching to the dead (1 Peter iii. 19, 20; iv. 6), to support the doctrine of future probation for those who die impenitent.

● THE USE OF THE WORD “GEHENNA” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It always means more than a place of partial confinement for a limited period. The twelve instances of its New Testament use are the following: “Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire [gehenna of fire]” (Matt. v. 22). “It is profitable for thee that one of thy mem-

bers should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell [gehenna]" (ver. 29). "And not thy whole body go into hell" (ver. 30). "But rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (x. 28). Gehenna is a place of destruction ("destroy"), and not merely of confinement for a season. "It is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire" (xviii. 9). In the preceding verse the place of punishment is called "eternal fire;" more than a temporary prison. "Ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves" (xxiii. 15). "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" (Ver. 33.) The "judgment of hell" is more than the restraint of waiting for future action and development, which is a prison in one sense. "It is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands to go into hell [gehenna], into the unquenchable fire" (Mark ix. 43). Gehenna is here defined by the "unquenchable fire," which is not a mere prison of some kind. "It is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell" (ver. 45). "It is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (ver. 47, 48). The "eternal fire" of Matthew xviii. 8, and the "unquenchable fire" of Mark ix. 43, are in Mark ix. 48 defined as "fire not quenched," never put out. "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke xii. 5). "And setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell" (James iii. 6). Gehenna here, too, is a place of *fire*; for the tongue is set on fire by it. Gehenna—valley of Hinnom—is well known to have been a place of constant fire, where the physical corruption of Jerusalem was consumed; that process for health purposes answering to the sewage system of modern cities. Doubtless the fire of punishment is figurative, not material, fire; for, there, "their worm dieth not," and literal fire and literal worm, could not subsist together.

In not *one* of the foregoing passages is gehenna represented as a "prison," but in each one as something far worse. In five of the twelve it is spoken of as *fire*, and in each of the rest as consistent with fire. It follows that the "prison" spoken of by Peter cannot with any authority be called *gehenna*, the place of the wicked dead. The time of destruction to the wicked is often said or implied to be at *death*. "Ye shall die in your sins." The Galilæans whom Pilate slew, perished when he slew them; and the eighteen on whom the tower fell perished when they died (Luke xiii. 1-5). The natural inference is, that all who die in their sins perish when they die. And Christ's words, "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell," naturally teach that being cast into gehenna comes to the wicked just "after" death. It does not appear that there is any place intermediate for the sinner between death and gehenna. This suggests—of which we shall further learn—that gehenna is a part of hades. The rich man in hades apparently went to the place of punishment immediately after death, and he went into a place of "flame," which, according to usage in the foregoing passages, must have been gehenna.

THE USE OF THE WORD "SHEOL" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

In general, sheol means the world of the dead. Sometimes qualifying phrases or circumstances give it a more specific meaning; as the abode of the wicked dead. The "lowest hell" was the place of the wicked in sheol. "But he knoweth not that the dead are there; that her guests are in the depths of sheol" (Prov. ix. 18). They are the "guests" of the foolish woman. The word "depths" indicates the part of sheol where the wicked are. "That he may depart from sheol beneath" (Prov. xv. 24). "Sheol beneath" is in contrast with "The way of life upward." The latter pertains to the righteous; the former, to the wicked. "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell [sheol], to the uttermost parts of the pit" (Isa. xiv. 15). The whole sentence taken together shows that the part of sheol meant was the place of the con-

demned. "When I cast him down to sheol with them that descend into the pit" (Ezek. xxxi. 16). The phrases, "Cast him down," and "Descend into the pit," would not be used in the case of the death of the righteous. "In a moment they go down to sheol" (Job xxi. 13). The connection shows that the wicked depart to sheol. "And they go down alive into the pit [sheol]; then shall ye understand that these men have despised the Lord" (Num. xvi. 30). Sheol must in part be the abode of the wicked.

Sheol is also represented as the abode of the righteous. The first instance of its use in Scripture is a case in point, "I will go down to the grave [sheol] to my son mourning" (Gen. xxxvii. 35). The sheol here is more than "*grave*;" it is a place for souls,—for Jacob and for Joseph. Jacob supposed his son was torn in pieces, and had no grave; yet he expected to meet him in sheol. Job said, "O that thou wouldest hide me in sheol, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past!" (Job xiv. 13.) Job had confidence in his own integrity, and believed in his final salvation. He therefore believed that sheol in some part was the abode of the righteous. His view must have been correct. "What man is he that shall live, and not see death, that shall deliver his soul from the power of sheol?" (Ps. lxxxix. 48.) This implies that *all* men become inhabitants of sheol. Then two classes must have been there, both the righteous and the wicked. They must be, or must have been, in two *states*, and doubtless in two *places*. As the committee on the revision of the Old Testament say, sheol is "the name of the abode of the dead," including both classes.

THE USE OF THE WORD "HADES" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The Septuagint nearly always translates the Hebrew "sheol" by the Greek "hades." The exceptions employ some word of similar meaning. For at least three hundred years before Christ, hades meant what sheol meant; and since the latter was the abode of the dead of both classes, the former was also. No evidence appears of any change at the

time of Christ or afterwards. Where the word "hades" is used to signify the place of either the righteous or the wicked, some qualifying language or circumstances, as in the case of sheol, indicate which part or state of hades is meant. "Thou . . . shalt be brought down unto hades" (Matt. xii. 23); "Thou . . . shalt be brought down unto hades" (Luke x. 15). Such expressions imply judgment, and the place of destruction in hades. "And in hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke xvi. 23). This passage makes it certain that in hades there was a place for the wicked dead. The rich man was there, and feared that his brethren would come there. That part of hades seems to have been gehenna; for it was a place of "anguish in . . . flame;" and gehenna was a place of punishment in fire. There is no reason for supposing a difference between gehenna and the place of punishment in hades.

But was the whole of hades a place of punishment? When Christ in the book of Revelation says, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore," he added, "And I have the keys of death and of hades" (Rev. i. 18). He having been dead and now being alive, it seems quite natural and appropriate for him to say that he had the keys of—the power over—death and *the world of the dead*. But to understand him as saying that he had the keys of death, and of the place of a *part* of the dead only, seems unnatural and inappropriate. Therefore we infer that hades was the world of *all* the dead. John "saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was death: and hades followed with him" (vi. 8). We can see why the place of the whole world of the *dead* should follow in obedience to *death*; but we cannot see why *only* the place of the punishment of the wicked should follow death. John "saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man accord-

ing to their works" (xx: 12, 13). At the scene of the judgment, why should only death, and the place of *punishment* among the dead, give up the dwellers in them for the great account? But, making hades mean the world of *all* the dead, it agrees with teaching elsewhere, that the righteous, as well as the wicked, shall be judged at the great day. Judging from these three passages in Revelation alone, it would seem impossible that hades should mean the world of the *wicked* dead *only*; or, that it should mean the *grave* only. Was it the grave only that followed death on the pale horse? They were evidently *beings*, not mere *bodies* or dust, that followed death.

"My flesh also shall dwell in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hades" (Acts ii. 26, 27). This undeniably refers to Christ. There is a difference between his "flesh" and his "soul:" one is in the *grave*, the other is in hades. The flesh rejoices in hope, because the soul is coming from hades to revivify it. What is this hades in which is the soul of Christ? Is it the place of the *wicked* dead? Christ has died for sinners; he does not need to go there to work out redemption. He has suffered the agonies of Gethsemane and the cross; he does not need to suffer in gehenna. That is the place of punishment for the wicked; Christ is not one of the wicked. Was not Christ in that part of sheol where Jacob expected to meet Joseph, and where no doubt, he *did* meet him and multitudes of others at last? The apostle Peter, in this passage, quotes from David's prophecy of Christ (Ps. xvi. 10). There the psalmist uses the Hebrew sheol, while Peter translates it hades, an inspired translation. The seventy-two writers of the Septuagint also translate sheol in this place by hades, and as there were two regions in sheol, there are also in hades; and Christ there is with the blessed. The penitent thief was to be with Christ in paradise—the place of the blessed—on the day of their death. Still, Christ was in hades. Hades, therefore, had a paradisiacal part, which was the "Abraham's bosom," where Abraham and Lazarus were. Abraham and his grandson Jacob

were doubtless in the same place in sheol or hades. The place in hades where the rich man was, being in plain sight of Abraham's bosom, with only a gulf between, may well be supposed to have been in the same world of the dead. Peter, to make his meaning clear to his hearers at the day of Pentecost, repeats by saying, "Neither was he left in hades, nor did his flesh see corruption" (Acts ii. 31). The repetition should make the meaning the more clear and the more emphatic to us.

THE BASIS AND USAGE FOR CALLING HADES AND SHEOL A
" PRISON."

The Scripture basis and usage.

The apostle Peter speaks of Christ as preaching to spirits in prison. He also says of him, "That neither was he left in hades" (Acts ii. 31). This very expression, "left in hades," when hades is understood as the world of the dead, suggests the idea of confinement, detention, and in that sense a *prison*. This is one apostle. Another, Paul, locates hades in the underground world, according to the common conception and expression of that early time. "Now this, he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH" (Eph. iv. 9). This was not his descent from heaven to earth, but to the "lower parts of the earth," the under world, when he died. In hades he was detained for a brief season. Compared with heaven, or even this life, hades was to him, and those he visited, a prison of detention in a mild sense. They all there awaited their resurrection, or ascension to a higher sphere. Christ's came soon.

Many Bible expressions indicate that sheol and hades, to the conception of Hebrews and Christians in scripture times, meant an under-world of the dead, which often had to the living a prison aspect. Some examples of such Bible expressions are these: "Deeper than sheol;" "From sheol beneath;" "Sheol from beneath;" "Brought down to sheol;" "When he went down to sheol;" "They also went down into sheol;" "Out of the midst of sheol;" "Shalt be brought down to

hades;" "The keys of hades and of death;" "Death and hades delivered up the dead." The Lord has never revealed to men where the world of the dead is. Their conceptions of it are naturally somewhat conformed to their astronomical views. It is no sin in them to have some inexact ideas about it. When astronomy taught that the earth was a flat body, with the sun, moon, and stars going around it, it was no coarse conception that there was an under-world, and there might well be in it a paradise, or elysian fields, as well as a Tartarus. That under-world was naturally conceived of as down below the grave, and the grave was the opening to it. The two were often conjoined in both thought and speech. There is progress shown in the revelation given by the Scriptures, and a part of it is based on progress in the divine acts, as in those of redemption. In the earlier and greater part of the revelation the dead in general were consigned to an under-world, or, a state and place below and apart from the highest heaven, where God reigned and angels dwelt. After Christ's ascension the righteous seem to have followed him at death to glory. But while the dead in general were in the under-world, it was often conceived and spoken of as a kind of a confinement and detention, even for the righteous, until there should come for them a better day. And in that aspect hades or sheol, as a whole, was a kind of prison, and was so regarded. Such Scripture phrases as "went down into sheol," and "keys of hades," are sufficiently explained in no other way. Besides, the Greek for "prison" often means only a "watch" of the night (Matt. xiv. 25; xxiv. 43; Mark vi. 48; Luke xii. 38), in which time there were those that kept guard for the detention of some and the *protection* of many more. Job said, "O that thou wouldest hide me in sheol, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past!" (Job xiv. 13.) He had in this expression a view of sheol as a place of confinement for *protection*. And what sheol was, hades was.

The Apocrypha shows many Hebrew conceptions at the time of Christ, and that also of the under-world.

“He leadeth down to hell and bringeth up;” “Out of the bottoms of inevitable hell;” “At the end thereof is the pit of hell;” “My life was near to the hell beneath;” “For he hath delivered us from hell.” In nearly or quite all these instances, the word “hell” stands for the world of the dead, and not for that of the wicked dead alone. Some of the dead went to a prison of punishment, and some to one of detention, until their redemption was made complete by their resurrection, or other deliverance, from the dead. That whole under-world was a prison in some aspect.

The early Christian Fathers used many expressions befitting the conception of hades as a prison.

Irenæus says, “He also descended into the lower parts of the earth, to behold with his eyes the state of those who were resting from their labors.”¹ “The Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth preaching his advent there also.”² “He remembered his dead saints,—and he descended to them;” “The Lord went away in the midst of the shadow of death, where the souls of the dead were;” “When the holy soul of Christ descended [to hades] many souls ascended and were seen in their bodies.” Clement of Alexandria says, “For Dionysus eagerly desiring to descend to hades;” “Let us put him out of sight, all alive as he is, into hades;” “They have vanished, and gone down into hades;” “The Lord descended to hades.” Hippolytus says: “Hades is a place in the created system, rude, a locality beneath the earth, in which the light of the world does not shine;” “To this locality there is one descent.” Tertullian says: “Every eddy thereof sucks down into hades;” “You must suppose hades to be a subterranean region;” “A vast deep space in the interior of the earth;” “The secret inner recess which is hidden in the earth;” “The fact that hades is not in any case opened for [the escape of] any soul;” “All souls, therefore, are shut up within hades.” These citations show, that, by the post-apostolic conception,

¹ Heresies, Bk. iv. c. xxii. s. 1.

² *Ibid.*, Chap. xxvii. s. 1.

hades was an underground inclosure, which it would be no straining of language to term a "prison."

The early Christian Fathers actually give to hades the name "prison."

Tertullian says, that he has "established the position ["Essay on Paradise"], that every soul is *detained* in safe keeping in hades until the day of the Lord."³ "Detained" suggests a prison of detention. Whether Tertullian had "established" that "position" or not, such was the position of the Fathers concerning the righteous dead previous to Christ's resurrection. Tertullian thought it would continue to be the condition of the righteous until their own resurrection. On that point the Fathers in general differed from him. They believed the righteous dead were taken to be with Christ at the right hand of the Father after his ascension. Tertullian says, "We understand 'the prison' pointed out in the Gospel to be hades"—Matt. v. 25.⁴ Speaking of hades and the departed, he assumes that "the same *prison* awaits them all when dead."⁵ He says, "All souls, therefore, are shut up within hades."⁶ Being "shut up" implies a kind of *prison*. He speaks of the righteous as well as the wicked in hades, for he adds, "There are already experienced there punishments and consolations; and there you have a poor man and a rich," referring to Lazarus and the rich man in hades.

Clement speaks of the righteous, deceased Gentiles as in "hades and in ward."⁷ "Ward" means "prison." He did not mean that they were in gehenna, but, they being righteous, that they were with the righteous in hades.

Hippolytus, commenting on Luke xxiii. and on Christ in hades, speaks of the "warders of hades."⁸ The "warders" were the guard, and a guard implies a kind of *prison*.

³ De Anima, Chap. lv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. lviii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Chap. lv.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Chap. lviii.

⁷ Miscellanies, Bk. vi. c. vi.

⁸ Fragments, Luke xxiii.

Extensive search among writings of the early Fathers has discovered only one instance where even possibly the word "prison" applies to gehenna. Yet there that word may be only a synonym of the word "lodging," which refers to "Abraham's bosom." And in the same sentence gehenna is termed "the fire." The language is that of Tertullian,* whose *usage* is to term and represent hades in its whole as a "prison," and gehenna as a "fire," and "abysmal depths." Patristical usage termed hades a prison. Did the apostle Peter write *contrary* to the usage adopted by his followers? Did they not copy him?

Both Irenaeus and Tertullian speak of those who regarded the human *body* as a "prison." That was a common conception. Hades to the righteous was a prison only as the body is a prison to the soul. That was the patristical view, and the Petrine and apostolical view. The primitive saints believed that their salvation would not be complete until they were delivered from their detention in hades. Hence they looked with great expectation to their resurrection, particularly until they received the idea that the souls of the righteous were transferred to be with their Saviour at the right hand of the Father.

When such leading teachers and writers as Tertullian, Clement, and Hippolytus, representing such communities as Carthage, Alexandria, and Rome, termed hades a "prison," we may be sure that such was the usage of their times. When we add the fact, that the known universal usage of centuries before and after, as well as during, their time, regarded hades as an underground inclosure,—temporary for the righteous,—we may justly be confirmed in the opinion that hades was then deemed a kind of prison. Adding to this the fact, that gehenna of itself was not called a prison, but something far worse—a place of fire, we are further helped on to the conclusion that Christ preaching to "spirits in prison" did *not* preach to the *impenitent* dead. He did go to "paradise," or "Abraham's bosom," when he

* *De Anima*, Chap. vii.

died, for he was to be there that day with the penitent one on the cross.

Besides all this, it is known that among the apostolic Fathers—even the *earliest* of them—there was the current idea, that apostles and eminent saints on dying, carried more or less gospel intelligence to their saved brethren in the world of the dead. And some of the more prominent and able of those apostolic Fathers taught, also, that Christ at his death visited his saints among the dead, and unfolded to them more than they knew before of his work of redemption. This was the gospel preached to “the dead,” and “preached to the spirits in prison.”