

# Where does our Soul go when we die?

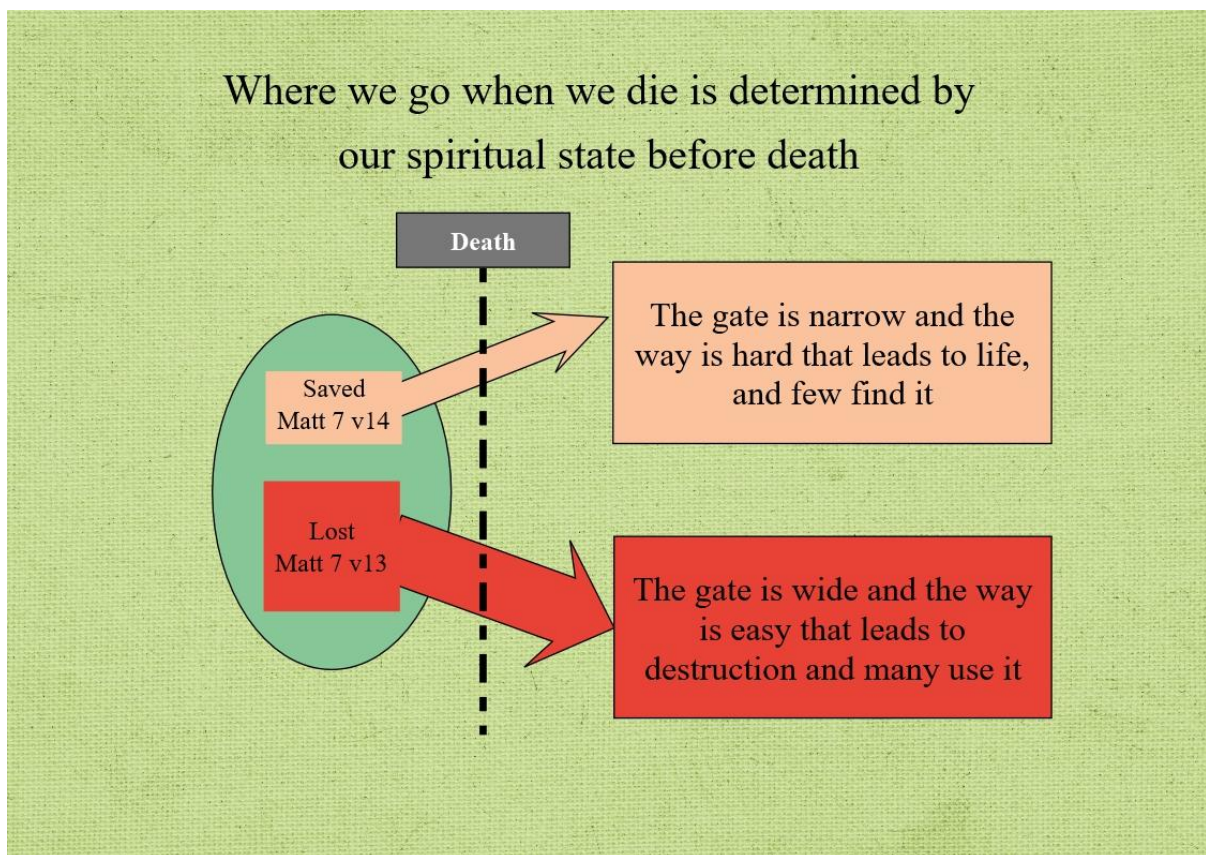
In researching this challenging subject I have been greatly helped by others, particularly by Peter Murcott and by a godly resource

[http://video.wvbs.org/video/where-do-we-go-when-we-die/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwub-HBhCyARIsAPctr7x0PLzadsIBBwKeDuqYCAR39Et3eZwl9tJW38TSnDpsnqcMvqSYPPMaAi3dEALw\\_wcB](http://video.wvbs.org/video/where-do-we-go-when-we-die/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwub-HBhCyARIsAPctr7x0PLzadsIBBwKeDuqYCAR39Et3eZwl9tJW38TSnDpsnqcMvqSYPPMaAi3dEALw_wcB)

At conception in the womb our bodies and our minds are gifts from our parents. They are a focus of our growth and receive much of our attention throughout our lives. But both our bodies and our minds are corruptible and will eventually fail. When we die our body is burned or buried – I hope to have my ashes scattered into the sea from the Ramsey Lifeboat of which I am Patron!!

**On the other hand, the Bible insists that our soul, is a gift directly from God; it does not die, it continues to live from inception to the day of judgement (Ecclesiastes 12 v 7).** What happens to our soul at death therefore is what we must now discuss.

Let us look at our **first diagram**. It is uncomfortable viewing.



**Saved or lost?** This is a choice that we can make. We have discussed this many times in St Barnabas and we can be sure of two truths. If we have responded to Jesus repented and turned to him in love and gratitude **we are saved**. We are justified by faith, and so long as that faith is real our behaviour will reflect it. **If on the other hand**, having heard of Jesus saving act on the cross and understood **His offer of salvation**, we reject that truth, then **we are lost in this life and utterly lost in the next**. There is a haunting verse in Matthew's Gospel where the Lord says to those who have not truly

surrendered themselves to Jesus, “Depart from me; I never knew you” (Matthew 7 21-23).

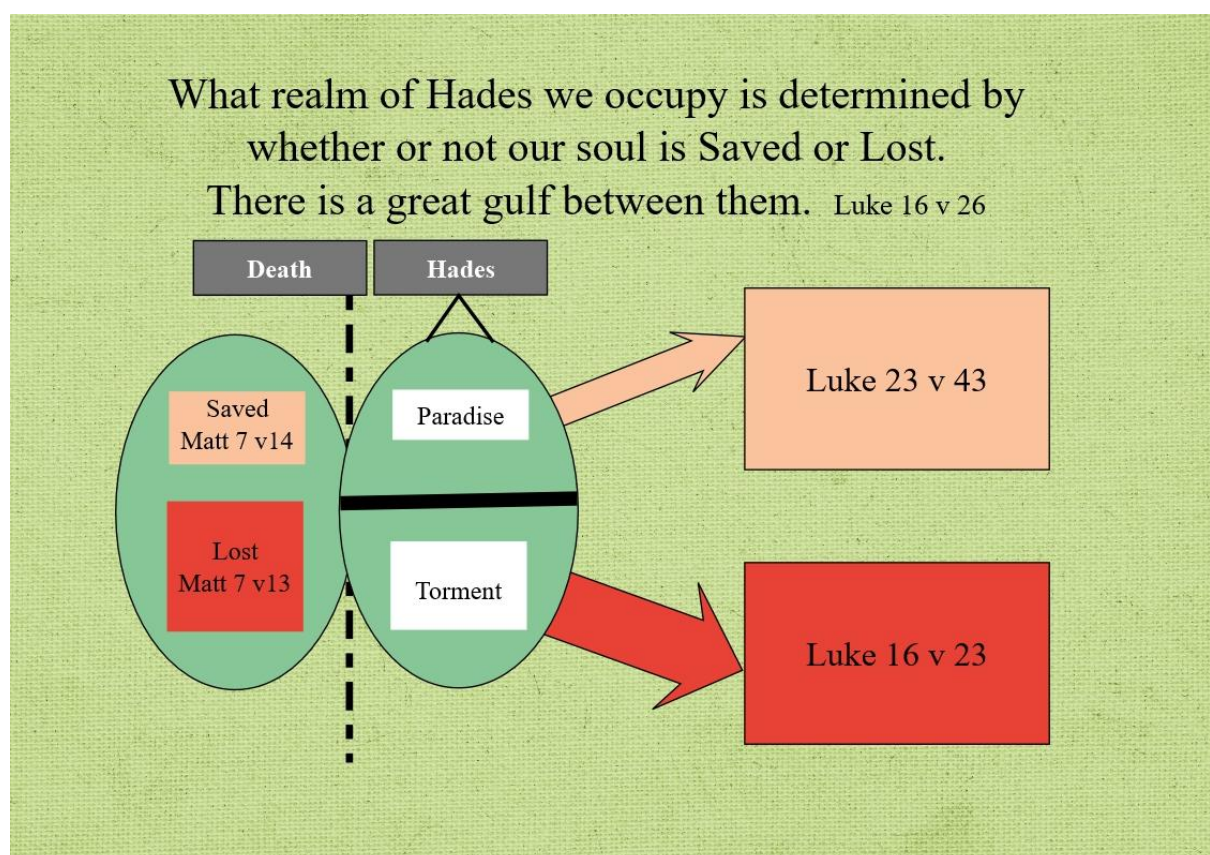
This much is clear, but beyond this certainty there are two difficult questions.

- a. Firstly, what about those who have never had the Gospel news explained to them, either because they have never been reached by missionaries or by friends and neighbours who do know and reverence Jesus?
- b. Secondly, what about children while they are too young to understand or whose brains are not capable of understanding?

We will never be able to answer either of these questions with authority until we stand before Jesus, but we can be sure that the Lord, who **is Lord of Justice, as well as Lord of Love, will do what is right.** This question of **Inclusive and Exclusive Salvation** is much debated, and is a subject for several further sermons, but not today. I have placed some relevant Bible verses in the Annex.

**We are told by Paul that when we die our soul will live on in a dwelling place made by God (2 Corinth 5 v1).** This place is called **Hades or Sheol.**

Now let us look at the second diagram.



**This second circle does not represent HELL.** It is **Hades** in Greek, or **Sheol** in Hebrew. **The Hadean realm is “The place of all departed souls.”** – departed, that is, from our bodies that have died. Early translations, including the King James Bible, frequently translated Hades as Hell but the two places are quite distinct and separate as we shall see. More recent translations including our English Standard Version (ESV) have it right.

**So what goes on in Hades?** It is the place to which all souls go when our **bodies die**. There are two areas within Hades. One is a place of comfort called Paradise and the other is a place of torment. **The best description** we have is what we heard read in today's second reading - Luke 16 vv 19-26 where Jesus uses the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to emphasise that in Hades (correct in the ESV) there is **a great gulf fixed between the two and it cannot be crossed**.

This correct reference to Hades also helps us to solve a problem which has long caused much confusion. You will recall the crucially important words by Jesus at the height of His suffering on the cross, recorded in today's Gospel reading - Luke 23 vv 39-43.

"Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us."

<sup>40</sup> The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation?" <sup>41</sup> And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." <sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

<sup>43</sup> Jesus replied to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

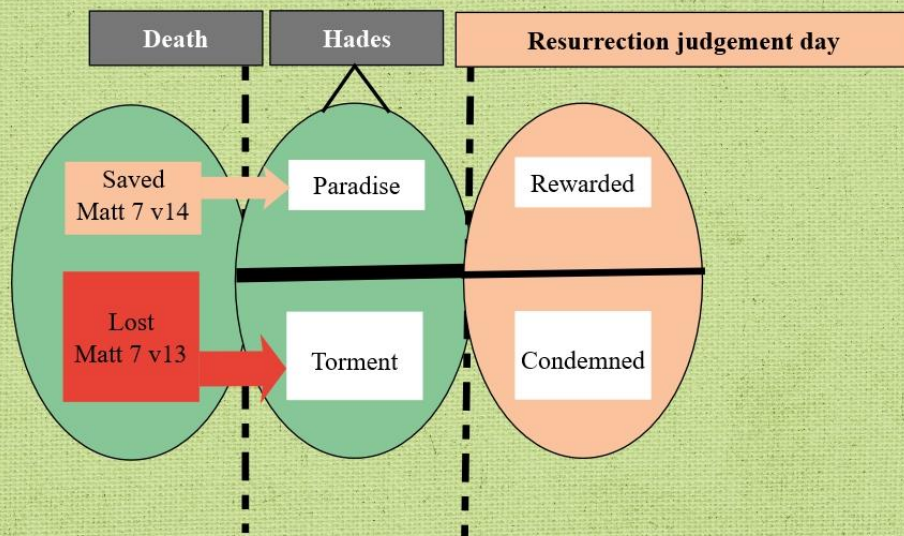
**These words can now be understood completely.** And it is very good news for the saved; at our death we do not go even temporally into purgatory much less into hell – the very day we die we will go to paradise. Jesus and the thief went to paradise in the Hades. No such promise was offered to the other thief.

**After three days Jesus alone was resurrected** from Hades as He had constantly predicted. We must note that as He emerged He gained a resurrected body, in key respects different from His earthly body. In this new body Jesus was able suddenly to appear in the midst of His disciples in the locked upper room. He did not now have to eat, to drink or to rest. (John 20). We are told that our resurrected bodies will have similar qualities on Resurrection Day. But that must come in another sermon.

So let us look at the third diagram – **The Day of the Lord** Judgement Day.



On Resurrection day, all souls leave Hades and with us who had been living, all appear before Jesus to be rewarded or condemned

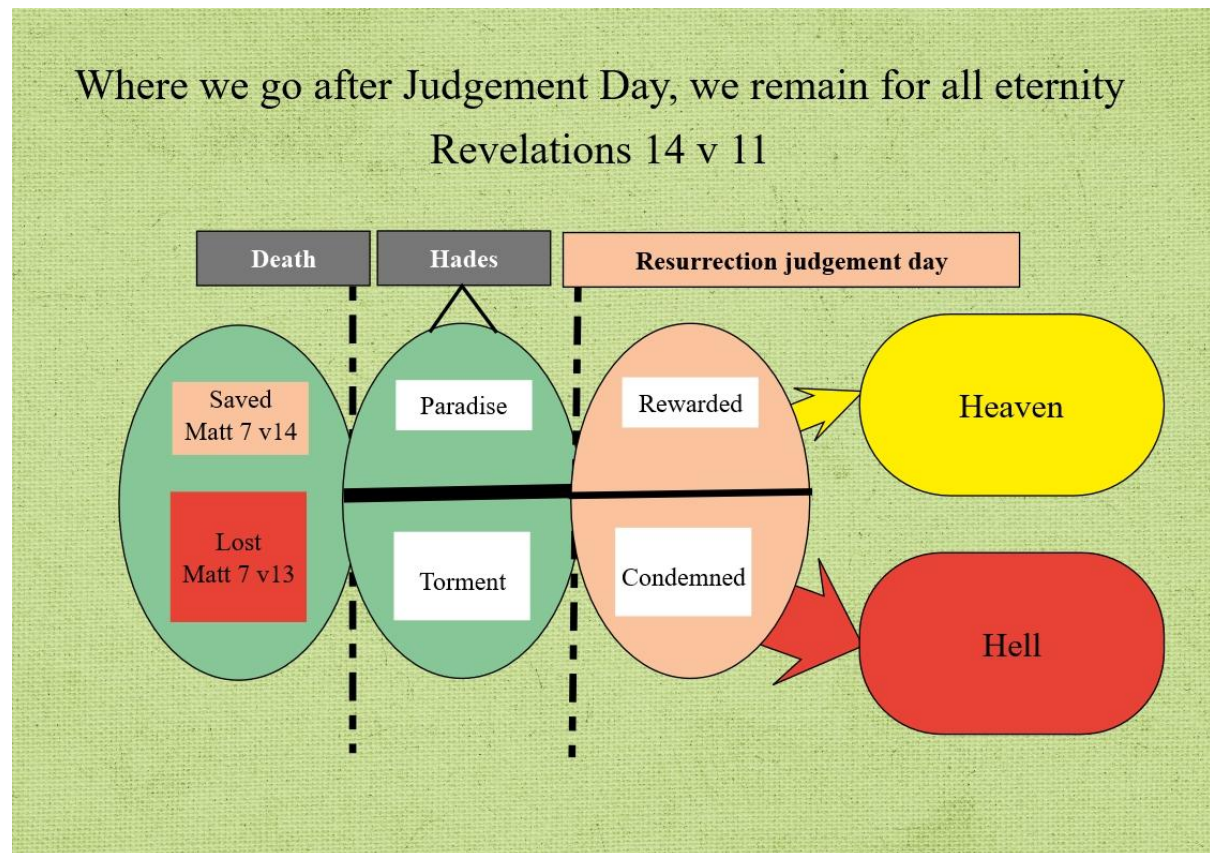


Because the Day of the Lord has not yet happened we are dependent upon the written record of the prophets, on the Revelation to St John and especially on the writings of Saint Paul, particularly on his letter to the Church in Corinth (Chapter 15 vv 24-44).

On Resurrection Day – **Hades will give up all its inhabitant souls who** have been there since their death. We who are still living and yet to be called to account, (Matthew 12 v 36) will now join those from Hades and all of us will be given resurrection bodies. We shall stand together before Jesus on Judgement Day.

**At this great assembly**, Christ the righteous must be seen by all those who had only previously seen Him as a criminal on the cross. Now He must be seen by all as our supreme judge and as the perfect son of God. Finally as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15 ..... ..“Then comes the end, ( v.24) when Jesus delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For He must reign until He has put all these enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.. .<sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God (the Father) may be all in all”.

At the end of Judgement Day all souls will be dispatched, either to be with the Lord in **Heaven**, (Matthew 25 v36) or to eternal damnation in **Hell**. (Revelation 21 v .8). **Our souls thereafter will remain in either Heaven or Hell for all eternity** (Rev 14 v 11). (Matthew 25 v 46).



These truths are revealed variously by the prophets, by Jesus during His lifetime, by the apostles in the Gospels, in Acts, in the epistles (particularly those of Paul) and in the Revelation to St John.

**How should we conclude.** God is the god of **justice as well as the God of Love**. When we seek to carry out the great commission, if we emphasise the latter at the expense of the former we will seriously mislead those who hear us.

**What happens to our souls when we die is determined by our relationship with the living Lord while we live. That is the urgent message with which we have been entrusted. Amen**

### The Readings:

**Ecclesiastes 12 vv 1-7.** The ageing of our corruptible bodies and God's gift of our imperishable soul.

**Luke 16 vv 19 – 26** . The great gulf fixed between the two realms of Hades.

**Gospel reading Luke 23 vv 39-43.** The promise of Jesus to the penitent thief.

## **Annex**

Those who urge Exclusive Salvation relay on such verses as:

Romans 1 vv 18-23; Romans 10 vv13-15; John 14 v 6; John 20 vv 20-31; Acts 4 v12; Acts 11 v 14. Acts 10 (“Captain Cornelius was a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God”. Yet it was still necessary for Peter to go all that way to Caesarea to explain salvation to him.

Those who reject Exclusive Salvation for those who have never heard the Gospel, rely upon the undisputed claim in the final sentence of Genesis 18 v 25, that “The judge of all will do right”.