

The Gates of Hell
By Pastor Frank Febus

Matthew 16:13-19

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

19 And I will give unto thee **the keys of the kingdom of heaven:** and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

KJV

Another misconception handed down to us by the well meaning ministers of our past was the concept of “the gates of Hell”. Some of our most exciting meetings were punctuated with scriptures used in such a way to evoke emotion, sometimes bordering on hysteria. Ask any seasoned preacher and he will tell you there are sure fire methods to “crank the crowd”. In my book it is called manipulation. I do believe in rip roaring services that are full of God’s anointing He alone orchestrates. We have been fed pabulum so long we feel compelled to go through the calisthenics of “havin Church” because it’s “Pentecostal”.

One such scripture that is used for this purpose is 1Peter 3:18-20 (Jesus preaching in Hell and taking the keys of Hell and Death from ole slew foot himself.) It made for good drama but it was pure fantasy.

The same can be said of “the gates of Hell.” This phrase has been used to encourage victory and to assure the hearers of God’s protection. This is well meaning and so was Santa Clause but we all grew up finding out it was all a total fabrication.

What then are the gates of Hell? I find no other reference to it outside of the one in Matthew 16. This is similar of the reference to the bosom of Abraham, in Luke 16:19. It appears only once in the word and in the mind of many it becomes paradise or heaven. The bible is not a multiple choice exercise. We either have a bull’s eye or we miss the mark. (No horse shoes, no hand grenades please)

Does the place we have called Hell have literal gates? I personally do not believe those condemned to eternal torture live in a gated community. The answer must lie (excuse the pun) in the Old Testament. I looked there and did not find it. Then I looked to see if it was of symbolic nature, then I hit the jack pot.

The first thing I came up with was the fact that Jesus never spoke English. The scripture in question was written in Greek. The word Jesus used was Hades, not hell. That messes things up a bit for the eternal torture crowd. According to Greek dictionaries every one in Hades is dead. Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and David, the righteous and the unrighteous are there. If you were dead that is where they would find you.

If, by definition, Hades is the abode of the dead, what is this concept then, the **gates** of Hades? If this thing was about death then that was the road I would investigate.

This was an eye opener. The KJV renders this word as Hell she'ol OT:7585, "place of the dead." Sha'al seems to be the basis for an important noun in the Old Testament, she'ol. Found 65 times in the Hebrew Bible, she'ol refers to the netherworld or the underground cavern to which **all buried dead go**. Often **incorrectly translated "hell" in the KJV**, she'ol was not understood to be a place of punishment, but simply the ultimate **resting place of all mankind** Genesis 37:35. Thus, it was thought

to be the land of no return Job 16:22; 17:14-16. It was a place to be dreaded, not only because it meant the end of physical life on earth, but also because there was no praise of God there, Psalms 6:5. Deliverance from it was a blessing, Psalms 30:3. (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

So far the road I was taking was getting my attention. Jesus was obviously referring to death. So the gates of death would not prevail against the Church? I was still scratching my head, until I came across another riveting piece of evidence. The Old Testament speaks of the gates and the bars of death. This language confirms the line of thinking that Jesus used on this subject.

Job 38:16-17

16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?

17 Have **the gates of death been opened unto thee?** or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death ?

KJV

Job 17:13-18:1

13 If I wait, **the grave is mine house:** I have made my bed in the darkness.

14 I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou are my mother, and my sister.

15 And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?

16 **They shall go down to the bars of the pit,** when our rest together is in the dust.

Gates keep persons and things in or out. The bars just mentioned seemed to be describing captivity, as in a jail cell.

Then I discovered a scripture that floored me.

Job uses language that points to the wrath on Jerusalem, the general resurrection, and consummation of the age. He looks to a time when the power of the grave will no longer hold him there.

Job 14:10-15

10 But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up:

12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: **till the heavens be no more**, they shall not awake, nor be **raised out of their sleep**.

13 O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, **until thy wrath be past**, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!

14 **If a man die, shall he live again?** all the days of my appointed time **will I wait, till my change come**.

15 Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

KJV

The great hope of victory over death and the grave was not relegated only to the New Testament Church. It was the expectation of the Old Testament Saints! The power of the grave would no longer hinder or prevail against them. Death would be destroyed because Jesus was the resurrection and the life.

Whosoever believes in Him though they were dead yet they would live.

The keys that were given to Peter were the tools he used to build the Church of the living God. Those keys unlocked the penalty of death passed on down to us through Adam. Peter preached those keys based on the authority of his revelation on who Jesus is.

Jesus said “Ye **must** be born again”. Why is this? It is because we were born with dead spirits that needed a resurrection. At the baptism of the water and of the spirit death lost its legal claim on us, and reversed the curse.

The penalty of death is lifted and the resurrected saint of God is no longer subject to the grave. Death is a conquered foe and the power of the grave destroyed. Now I can feel a shout coming!

1 Corinthians 15:55-56

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Hosea 13:14

14 I will ransom them from **the power of the grave**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

KJV

1 Corinthians 15:54-56

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

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

KJV

Revelation 1:18

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; **and have the keys of hell and of death.**

KJV