

The Doctrine of Sheol/Hades

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

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The Escape from Hell:

Before we actually cover this doctrine, let's look at the escape from hell first. Jesus told Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." (John 3:16–19). The Apostle John concludes this chapter with the words: *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him* (John 3:36). Salvation is simple, and it take but a few seconds. Believe in Jesus Christ and you are save; if you choose not to believe in God's Son for the entirety of your life, then you are not saved, and will not spend eternity with God.

Preface: All of my life, I had always assumed that once a person dies, he went to heaven, which, for lack of a more precise direction, was up. Of course, those who went to hell went down. I have mental images of hell as being inside great caverns within the earth, at the very center of the earth, where it is exceedingly hot (which just happens to be the case of the center of the earth). To some extent, this is how things are today—believers find themselves face to face with the Lord at death and unbelievers are cast into hell; however, this was not true of Old Testament saints, which caused some problems when certain theologians tried to understand 1Sam. 28.

Originally, I was going to focus on Sheol as found in the Old Testament; however, as I began to cover this, it became clear that I needed to cover the New Testament references as well. Furthermore, there is the term *Gehenna* which is found first in the Old Testament and then is carried over into the New, based partially upon what happened there during the intertestamental era.



Isa 66:24 "As they leave, they will see the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their maggots will never die, their fire will never go out, and they will be a horror to all mankind."

Hieronymus Bosch's Painting *Hell*



Hieronymus Bosch's Painting *Hell*

1. The related Hebrew words:
 - 1) The proper feminine noun is Sh^eōl (שׁוֹל) [pronounced *sh^eohl*], and it is a word for the underworld, for the unseen world of souls which have passed away and it is a reference to the underworld

for both believers and unbelievers. It is obviously transliterated Sheol. *Hades* is the Greek equivalent. Barnes allows for this to stand either for the region of departed spirits or the grave. In the KJV, this is translated *hell, sheol, the grave, the pit*. There are two verbs which are very similar to Sheol; one which means *to ask*; and another which means *to hollow out*. Although, it is possible that neither verb is the origin of Sheol, the latter verb may refer to a hollow area (so to speak) in the earth. It has been suggested that the former meaning refers to asking the dead for information, something forbidden by Scripture. Strong's #7585 BDB #982.

- 2) In some places, Sheol could simply be understood as the *grave*; and in others, the passage may be distorted to mean that. However, there is a word in the Hebrew which refers to the actual physical grave: *qeber* (קֶבֶר) [pronounced *KEH^b-VEHR*] means *grave, sepulcher*. There is also a feminine form. Strong's #6913 BDB #868. There is also the feminine noun *q^{eb}ûwrâh* (קֶבֶרֶת) [pronounced *k^{eb}-voo-RAW*], which means *a grave, a burial*. Strong's #6900 BDB #869. All of these nouns proceed from the verb *to bury, to heap up a mound*. The fact that we find this word used in the same books as Sheol and with the same frequency indicates that these may have been words with similar meanings, but the meanings are diverse enough to warrant both words being used by the same writers and same speakers. In other words, since this word definitely refers to the physical grave, *Sheol* refers to more than just that.
 - 3) I want you to understand how I approach this: I already do have a particular point of view; however, I want for this to come out naturally; that is, for the Scripture to clearly point in this direction. I almost assume the opposite position as I examine a particular topic, and make the Scripture demand that I take the correct position. This is diametrically opposed to the idea of offering up the things which I already believe in, and then cite a few *proof texts*. When you read this, you may not recognize that is what I have done; but that is my approach from the beginning. However, I am not looking just to support that which I already believe; nor am I looking to come up with doctrines which are in opposition to that which has been received of the saints over all of these years. Neither approach is on my agenda.
2. Let me begin with a definition of Sheol, which should be supported by the passages which we examine: Sheol is a place for departed souls. Both believers and unbelievers are assigned to Sheol, but they are placed in separate compartments, between which is a great gulf fixed (Luke 16:19–31). Although what we will find in Scripture, from the Old Testament up through the gospels, is that the concept of Sheol will follow what we find in Luke 16 (which is not a parable but an actual event). It might be a good idea to break down the various uses of Sheol, as this word, while it can be technical, can actually have several uses:
- 1) Sheol can refer to a place of departed souls, with two compartments. This is its most technical and precise meanings. Even though this appears to be clearly taught at the end of Luke 16, apparently this was an issue for the early church (however, many things in Scripture are issues for many *Christian* religions¹). As we have Old Testament passages which refer to Sheol as a place of the dead, a place for believers who have died, and also a place where unbelievers go at death; we can easily confirm what we find in Luke 16.
 - 2) Sheol can refer to the place of departed believers. Isa. 38:10
 - 3) Sheol can refer to the place of dead unbelievers.
 - 4) Sheol can simply be a metaphor for death or the grave. Isa. 28:18
 - 5) In at least one passage, Sheol is used figuratively; where Jonah calls to God as though from Sheol. Jonah 2:2.
 - 6) Sometimes, when we find Sheol, it could be seen as having more than one of these meanings. For instance, in Gen. 37:35, this could refer to death or the grave; or it could refer to the place of the departed spirits of believers.
3. Where is Sheol?
- 1) One could make the argument that all of the language found in Scripture with regards to Sheol is metaphorical. That is, the idea that Sheol is in the midst of the earth could be in contrast to heaven, which is light years above the earth. The idea is, there could not be a place further from heaven than the midst of the earth.

¹ Salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, for instance.

- 2) However, all of the words used for Sheol—all of its synonyms—are words used for very literal pits; there are two words for *pit* which are used also for Sheol (we will cover these later on) and well as the expression *lowest [part of] the earth*.
 - 3) Given the fact that we are dealing with departed spirits, there is no reason why they could not reside in some sort of compartment within the earth itself. This does not have to be a physical compartment with walls and an empty space, but there is no reason to locate Sheol in some place other than lower earth (see Ezek. 26:19–20).
 - 4) One might argue, *how do you assign a physical place to that which is spirit?* Easy—the Holy Spirit is a Spirit and He indwells us individually. We have souls, and these souls appear to reside in our cranial area. When I am swimming near a waterfall in Thailand, my soul is not back in a car driving around downtown Houston—my soul is also near this waterfall. Therefore, it should not be difficult to grasp that God has assigned actual physical places for that which is not physical.
4. The notion of Sheol and its location and function is not strictly a Jewish idea. There were peoples living around Israel who believe in the same thing. This does not denigrate the notion of Sheol. There are some doctrines which stretch back into time. Recall that the book of Job is a discussion about man and God and suffering, and in that book, the notion of Sheol is discussed numerous times. These men all pre-dated Abraham, and yet they were able to discuss this concept. Therefore, we should not be surprised that other nations shared this view, no more than we should be surprised that almost every nation on earth follows the 7-day work week.
 5. Where the word *Sheol* is found: Gen. 37:35 42:38 44:29, 31 Num. 16:30, 33 Deut. 32:22 2Sam. 22:6 1Kings 2:6, 9 Job. 7:9 11:8 17:16 21:13 24:19 26:6 Psalm 6:5 9:17 16:10 18:5 30:3 31:17 49:14–15 55:15 86:13 88:3 89:48 116:3 139:8 141:7 Prov. 1:12 5:5 7:27 9:18 15:11 15:24 23:14 27:20 30:16 Eccles. 9:10 SOS. 8:6 Isa. 5:14 14:9, 11 28:15 28:18 38:10, 18 57:9 Ezek. 31:15-17 32:21, 27 Hosea 13:14 Jonah 2:2 Habak. 2:5
 6. Because doctrines in the Old Testament were revealed a little at a time, let's first see what we know about Sheol in Genesis and Job:
 - 1) After Jacob thought that his favorite son had been killed, he spoke of spending the rest of his life in mourning. "I will go down to Sheol mourning for my son." (Gen. 37:35). This is the first reference to *Sheol* in the Old Testament and probably referred to the *grave*. Despite the fact that Jacob said *I will go down*, we cannot seize this fact and conclude the Sheol, the abode of the dead, is in the earth (although, certainly, I would like to). The remark is too innocuous to take this point of view.
 - 2) When it was suggested to Jacob that his other young son by Rachel, Benjamin, would be taken from him, he said, "My son will not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow." (Gen. 42:37b). Like the previous quotation, this could simply be a reference to going to the grave in sorrow. Judah tells this to Joseph in Gen. 44:29, 31, explaining why Benjamin could not be brought to him.
 - 3) The book of Job was written during the book of Genesis, and probably preceded the lives of the patriarchs. What we will find here is the understanding of these men of the meaning of Sheol. Job makes the obvious observation, "The man which goes down to Sheol does not come up again." (Job 7:9). This seems to be more and more closely related to a place, as opposed to simply the grave (although it can obviously be understood as the *grave* in this passage).
 - 4) Zophar makes an interesting statement, saying that knowledge of God is "...higher than the heavens (and)...deeper than Sheol." (Job 11:8). Again, what is implied here is more of a *place* within the earth than simply the grave. A grave is not really going to be that deep; if all Zophar means was the *grave*, then he would have been better off making reference to the deepest well, or the deepest sea—that would have been more apt for his analogy. So, it is at this point where we recognize a two-fold understand of Sheol, as both the grave and as an abode for the dead deep in the earth.
 - 5) Job asks the rhetorical question in Job 17:16, what will become of his hope—will it go down with him to Sheol? This could be taken to refer to the abode of the dead as well as simply the grave and death.
 - 6) In Job 21, Job observes that there are wicked men who lead essentially good and prosperous lives; and that everything seems to be fine, until, of course, they die and go down to Sheol (Job 21:13). By simple observation, Job indicates that karma is not the order of the day (*karma* means you get back

what you give out). In fact, religions which adhere to the concept of karma must also include reincarnation in their religious philosophy, as their observations preclude karma as being able to be confined to one person's life. Now, recall that there is another word which is more commonly used for *the grave*? We find that word used here, by Job, in Job 21:32. When Job uses both words, this indicates that there could be a shade of difference, which is the approach that we are being forced to take (which is fine, as that squares us with traditional doctrine).

- 7) What we find in the book of Job, in this conversation between Job and the three *friends* is a fine tuning of what was known to be true and what they were able to observe. In Job 24, he speaks of the evil man and what he does, and that death is what ends his evil; and, at some point, he is remembered no more. **Just as drought and heat consume the snow waters, so Sheol consumes the one who has sinned** (Job 24:19). Here, the use of *Sheol* is not necessarily specialized—it could simply refer to one's death.
- 8) The Location of people after their death is even more clear in Job 26:5–6: **The departed spirits (or, *Rephaim*) tremble under the waters and their inhabitants. Naked is Sheol before Him and Abaddon has no covering.** The idea is, God sees all which we find in these places.
 - (1) By the way, we find **Abaddon** here and in five other passages: Job 28:22 31:12 Psalm 88:11 Prov. 15:11 27:20. It is always found in conjunction with *Sheol* or with *death* and might reasonably refer to the compartment of Sheol which is designed either for the fallen angels or for fallen man. For this reason, we will need examine this word as well, which we will do after examining the other passages containing the word Sheol.
7. Sheol is only found thrice in the Law of Moses²:
 - 1) When Korah rebelled against God, there was an earthquake and he was swallowed up alive by Sheol (Num. 16:30, 33) for rebelling against God. Although this could be taken as the grave, it is just as easily applied here to the compartment of the dead.
 - 2) Deut. 32:22, one of the early references to Sheol, makes it clear that we are not speaking simply of a grave: **For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with its increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.** The context of this verse is unbelieving Israel, who had forgotten her God and who provoked God to anger. Because they neglected the Rock Who sired them and because they forgot God, Who gave them birth, God would hide His face from them. They provoked him with their idols, and this results in **a fire being kindled in His anger.** Fire speaks of judgment. God's anger speaks of judgment. When you discipline your son or daughter, you are not always mad at them. However, when they are young, that is what appears to be. God does not possess the emotion anger; however, this is used in order to describe Him in terms which we can understand. **The fire kindled by His anger will burn in the *lowest Sheol*;** which we may take as the compartment where unbelievers are kept. The idea is, the occupants of the *lowest Sheol* are those who are under judgment. The fire of this judgment will extend to even the earth, which will be burned up (2Peter 3:7, 12 Rev. 18:16–19), and a new heavens and a new earth will be brought into existence (Rev. 21:1–5).
8. I want you to note that at this time, we have a reasonable understanding of Sheol. It is a place of the dead, or where the dead are. There is a compartment of Sheol called by Moses *lowest Sheol*. Although what we have here is not the evidence which nails down this doctrine, it is in accordance with our understanding of it. We will continue to examine the remainder of Scripture just in case there are any passages which seem to suggest otherwise.
9. Sheol as found in the historical writings: since Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are chiefly narrative (with a lot of genealogy in the latter book), we have few mentions of Sheol in these historical records. In fact, strictly speaking, *Sheol* is not found in Samuel or Chronicles (it does appear in a psalm that David wrote in 2Samuel). We do find it in 2Kings 2:6, 9, in the advice that David gives his son Solomon prior to his (David's) death. Because of Joab's actions, David urges Solomon not to let Joab's gray hair go down to Sheol in peace (v. 6). He urges the same be done with Shimei.
10. Sheol in the psalms:

² I don't include Genesis in the Mosaic Law.

- 1) Psalm 6:5: **For there is not in death Your memorial; in Sheol, who gives thanks to You?** The context is, David thinks that he may be dying under discipline. The idea is, once a man is dead, there is no more glorification of God.
- 2) In Psalm 9, we appear to be in the final judgment, seen as a judgment of nations, with our Lord reigning over the earth (vv. 7–8). At the same time, God will not forsake those who seek Him (vv. 9–10). **The wicked turn to Sheol, all of the nations who forget God** (v. 17). Interpreting Sheol here seems at first to be more difficult. Here, it refers more to the place of the unsaved dead. The time frame is during the 100 year reign of Jesus Christ, which is a time when that portion of Sheol still contains a population of unbelievers.
- 3) David speaks of being preserved by the Lord in Psalm 16 and how the Lord is his inheritance. He speaks of Bible doctrine in his soul which gives him stability (vv. 7–9), and then says, **My flesh will dwell securely because you will not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither will You allow Your Holy One undergo decay** (vv. 9b–10). The first part of this passage has a two-fold fulfillment: (1) David's soul will not be left in Sheol; that is, he will rise from the dead; (2) our Lord Jesus Christ will not be left in Sheol—He will rise from the dead, as has been prophesied here and elsewhere. In the last portion of this verse, it says **You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay (or, to see corruption)**. Our Lord's body would not putrefy; nor would it taste sin.
- 4) 2Sam 22 is almost identical to Psalm 18. In the first section of this psalm, David speaks of being delivered from death by God. 2Sam. 22:6, David says that the cords of Sheol were around him and the snares of death confronted him—this is simply poetical language to indicate that he was very close to dying when God rescued him (this is equivalent to Psalm 18:5).
- 5) In David's fifth psalm where he mentions Sheol, he speaks of his soul being brought up from Sheol—David expected to be resurrected (Psalm 30:3). By the way, Joseph had this same expectation, which is why he wanted his bones buried in the Land of Promise rather than in Egypt.
- 6) Psalm 31:17: **O Jehovah, let me not be ashamed, For I have called You, let the wicked be ashamed, Let them become silent to Sheol.** Clearly, there is a place for the wicked, the unbelievers, in Sheol. There is a place for David there as well (which is in complete agreement with Luke 16), but he will be taken out of Sheol (Psalm 30:3).
- 7) Psalm 49 is the first psalm to mention Sheol that David did not write. **Like sheep they are headed for Sheol; Death will shepherd them. The upright will rule over them in the morning, and their form will waste away in Sheol, far from their lofty abode. But God will redeem my life from the power of Sheol, for He will take me** (vv. 14–15). Again, the unbeliever will end up in Sheol, shepherded by death. God will purchase the psalmist's soul from the power of Sheol.
- 8) Psalm 55 is another psalm by David wherein he prays for the destruction of the treacherous. David speaks of a friend who deceives him and works against him and asked that this one go down alive into Sheol (Psalm 55:12–15). The idea is more of an emphatic desire rather than David actually expecting one of his enemies (who has posed as a friend) to actually descend alive into Sheol. It is not really far from our saying, "Go to hell." Our saying may be a little more succinct, but the essential desire is the same. We may use this saying, but we would not really expect it to occur (at least, not then and there). Look upon David's meaning as being similar—a strong verbalization of intense disapprobation.
- 9) David writes: **Your grace toward me is great and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol** (Psalm 86:13). Because of God's grace, David's soul will not remain in Sheol.
- 10) Psalm 88:3 (not written by David): **For my soul has had enough troubles and my life has drawn near to Sheol.** The idea here is, the psalmist feels close to death and problems have troubled his soul. This, by the way, does not have to be taken literally. That is, the psalmist need not be physically near death for this statement to indicate the feeling of his soul.
- 11) David in Psalm 89:48: **What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?** David means that all men die—even Lazarus, who was resurrected from the dead, eventually died. The only One Who can deliver us from the power of Sheol, where all the dead are, is Jesus Christ.
- 12) Psalm 116 is very similar to Psalm 18, including v. 3, which reads: **The cords of death encompass me; and the terrors of Sheol came upon me.** The psalmist is being taken by death and we are probably speaking of one who is literally near a physical death. Some suggest that this psalm was written by

- Hezekiah when he was about to die under discipline (he obviously borrowed from the Davidic Psalm 18).
- 13) The tenth psalm of David to mention Sheol is Psalm 139 (although David wrote about half of the psalms, by far the most psalms mentioning Sheol were penned by him). This psalm is about God's attributes; He is omnipresent, because *If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there!* (v. 8).
 - 14) The final psalm which mentions Sheol is also written by David; Psalm 141. *Just as when one plows and breaks open the earth, our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol* (v. 7). Here, Sheol is not used technically, but just as a reference to death.
11. Sheol in Proverbs and the other writings:
- 1) *My son, if sinners entice you, don't be persuaded. If they say--"Come with us! Let's set an ambush and kill someone. Let's attack some innocent person just for fun! Let's swallow them alive, like Sheol, still healthy as they go down to the Pit. We'll find all kinds of valuable property and fill our houses with plunder* (Prov. 1:10–13). Here, Sheol is used as an expression; the criminals would overcome their victims just as Sheol would overcome all those who are living.
 - 2) In Prov. 5:5, it is said of an immoral woman: *Her feet go down to death and her steps lay hold of Sheol*. The idea is that immoral women can distract one from the gospel and from spiritual growth. Sheol is used in its less technical sense of death; and, in this case, the death of an unbeliever or the death of the believer by the sin unto death.
 - 3) We have a similar concept in Prov. 7:27: *Her house is the way to Sheol descending to the chambers of death*.
 - 4) Prov. 9:18: *And he does not know that the departed spirits [or, Raphaim] are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol*. This tells us that there is a place for departed spirits and that they reside in the depths of Sheol.
 - 5) Prov. 15:11: *Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD--how much more, human hearts*. Although the point is, God can see into our very souls; it also indicates that there are two places which God can see into: Sheol and Abaddon.
 - 6) Prov. 23:14–5: *Don't withhold correction from a youth; if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. Strike him with a rod, and you will rescue his life from Sheol*. Here, discipline for a child is urged, to keep that child from the grave. I think the use of Sheol here is nontechnical—simply to keep the kid from an early death.
 - 7) Prov. 27:20: *Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and people's eyes are never satisfied*. Again, Sheol and Abaddon are found together. The idea is, they continue to take in the souls of the dead. There is no time when they have had enough. The point of the passage is that man's lusts are the same way.
 - 8) Prov. 30:16: *Sheol; a barren womb; earth, which is never satisfied with water; and fire, which never says, "Enough!"* Sheol never produces a birth; no one is born out of Sheol. But it continually desires more.
 - 9) There is no real human activity in Sheol. Eccles. 9:10 reads: *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, where you are going*. What we are going to do needs to be done here on earth.
 - 10) SOS 8:6b reads: *Love is as strong as death; ardent love [or, jealousy] is as unrelenting [or, severe, inflexible] as Sheol*. The passage is about love; however, what we know about Sheol here is that it is almost permanent and very inflexible.

| Sheol in Proverbs | |
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| Prov. 1:12 | <i>Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, Even whole, as those who go down to the pit;</i> |
| Prov. 5:5 | <i>Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol.</i> |
| Prov. 7:27 | <i>Her house is the way to Sheol, Descending to the chambers of death.</i> |
| Prov. 9:18 | <i>But he does not know that the dead are there, That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.</i> |

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| Prov. 15:11 | Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, How much more the hearts of men! |
| Prov. 15:24 | The path of life leads upward for the wise That he may keep away from Sheol below. |
| Prov. 23:14 | You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from Sheol . |
| Prov. 27:20 | Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied. |
| Prov. 30:16 | Sheol , and the barren womb, Earth that is never satisfied with water, And fire that never says, "Enough." |
| <i>Charles Bridges asks "Why do so many despise wisdom and instruction? Because the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the LORD, is not set before them (Ps 36:1). They are unaware of its value. They scorn its directions. They are only wise in their own eyes. They are rightly called fools who despise such blessings.</i> | |
| <i>Precept Austin: In Proverbs, a fool is one who is morally deficient from the standpoint of being able to make reasoned moral judgments. He willfully refuses to make moral choices, choosing neither good nor rejecting evil. He arrogantly refuses to receive moral instruction and to learn from his mistakes (Pr 1:7; 12:15; 15:5). The fool is characterized by foolishness ("iwweleth), an internal moral corruption that renders the fool impotent to make reasonable moral judgments in life (Pr 15:21; 16:22). His moral deficiency manifests itself in matters of speech, morality, discipline, religion, and daily life. He speaks either the wrong thing or at the wrong time (Pr 10:8,10,14,21; 14:3), and he is quick to show his anger (Pr 12:16; 20:3) and to refuse resolution (Pr 29:9).</i> | |
| From http://www.preceptaustin.org/proverbs_17_commentary.htm accessed November 9, 2014. | |

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

12. Much of what the prophets wrote about was judgment against Israel (or, to be more accurate, judgment against Judah and/or Israel). Therefore, we would expect there to be many references to Sheol in the writings of the Prophets:
- 1) Isaiah, like the other prophets, often spoke of judgment against Israel. Here, he warns them that they are going into captivity for lack of knowledge. Sheol, the grave, the place of departed spirits, will open wide for all of those in Israel who are without knowledge. Isa. 5:13–14: **Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; Their honorable men are famished, And their multitudes are parched with thirst. Therefore Sheol has enlarged its desire, And opened its mouth without measure; And their glory, their multitude, their pomp, and he who rejoices among them, descend into it.**
 - 2) Isa. 14:9–11: **Sheol from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall answer and tell you, Are you also become weak as we? are you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the noise of your harps: the worm is spread under you, and worms cover you.** It appears as though that there are those in Sheol who are stirred up to meet us at our coming. However, the context of this passage is primarily one of judgment against Israel.
 - 3) Those who have rebelled against God make a covenant with death and with Sheol: **Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.** (Isa. 28:18).
 - 4) Hezekiah speaks of going to Sheol before his time in Isa. 38:10. He speaks of Sheol as essentially the end of all spiritual progress and the end of any more glorification of God (Isa. 38:18).
 - 5) Isa. 57:9 reads: **You went to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far away and sent them down even to Sheol.** This is a marvelous passage. Israel is becoming more and more carried away with other cultures through trade and involvement with them, that Israel had turned away from God. Traders were sent out all over the world, even as far as Sheol. This is poetic license. No trader went to Sheol to trade; the idea is, they went so far to transact foreign commerce that it was almost like going to Sheol; and certainly put them in league with death.

- 6) Ezek. 31:15–17 speaks of the destruction of Assyria: "This is what the Lord GOD says: I caused grieving on the day the cedar went down to Sheol. I closed off the underground deep because of it: I held back the rivers of the deep, and its abundant waters were restrained. I made Lebanon mourn on account of it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. I made the nations quake at the sound of its downfall, when I threw it down to Sheol to be with those who descend to the Pit. Then all the trees of Eden, all the well-watered trees, the choice and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the underworld. They too descended with it to Sheol, to those slain by the sword. As its allies they had lived in its shade among the nations. What we need to get from this is, Sheol is a place of judgment and those being judged descend into it.
 - 7) Ezek. 32:21–23: Warrior leaders will speak from the middle of Sheol about him and his allies: They have come down; the uncircumcised lie slain by the sword. Assyria is there with all her company; her graves are all around her. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. Her graves are set in the deepest regions of the Pit, and her company is all around her burial place. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword--they who once spread terror in the land of the living. This passage is about the Assyrian attack on Egypt. Those warriors who have been judged already are in Sheol and they beckon to Egypt's warriors.
 - 8) Ezek. 32:26: Meshech and Tubal are there, with all their hordes. Their graves are all around them. All of them are uncircumcised, slain by the sword, although their terror was once spread in the land of the living. They do not lie down with the fallen warriors of the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were placed under their heads. The punishment for their sins rested on their bones, although the terror of these warriors was once in the land of the living. This is an interesting passage, where some uncircumcised warriors went down to Sheol with their weapons. I suspect what is meant here is there is some kind of honor in their deaths (since other portions of Scripture seem to indicate that Sheol is the cessation of most human endeavors). In any case, with the two groups mentioned here, there is no such honor in their deaths.
 - 9) Hosea 13:14 is found quoted, more or less, in 1Cor. 15:55: I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death. Death, where are your barbs? Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from My eyes. Jesus Christ would ransom us from the power of the grave. By the way, 1Cor. 15:55 reads: O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?
 - 10) Jonah uses Sheol figuratively, to indicate how far from God he was when in the mouth of the great fish: I called to the LORD in my distress, and He answered me. I cried out for help in the belly of Sheol; You heard my voice (Jonah 2:2).
 - 11) Habak. 2:5 Moreover, wine betrays; an arrogant man is never at rest. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and like Death he is never satisfied. He gathers all the nations to himself; he collects all the peoples for himself. This final use of Sheol in the Old Testament merely indicates to us that Sheol is insatiable. It can never receive enough.
13. In the course of our study, we came across two other words which we should investigate. The first is the word *ʾābaddōwn* (אַבְדֹּון) [pronounced *ub-ahd-DOHN*], which means *destruction, ruin, perishing, abyss*; and is transliterated *ʾAbaddōn*. It is more likely a proper noun rather than a description. *ʾAbaddōn* is the place of ruin in Sheol; a place of the lost dead. Strong's #11 BDB #2. We find *Abaddon* in the wisdom literature only: Job 26:6 28:22 31:12 Psalm 88:11 Prov. 15:11 27:20. Bear in mind that Job would have been written during the time of Genesis, probably prior to the time of the patriarchs.
- 1) This word first caught our attention in Job 26:6: *Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering*. Here, both words are used as nouns, as they are both used in a parallel thought. In order for something to be naked or without a covering, it must be a *thing* in the first place. This tells us, at the very least, we are speaking of related nouns. We know that this thing is related to *destruction* and *ruin* because of its cognates.
 - 2) Job goes on in Job 28:20–23: *Where then does wisdom come from, and where is understanding located? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing and concealed from the birds of the sky. Abaddon and Death say, "We have heard news of it with our ears." But God understands the way to wisdom, and He knows its location*. Here, *Abaddon and Death* are metonymies for those who have died as unbelievers. One might even include the fallen angels. They are not filled with divine wisdom at death. Apparently those who are dead are conscious, but it is unclear as to what they know.

- 3) The context of Job 31 is Job says, "If I am guilty of these sorts of sins [and he lists them], then this should happen to me." Then Job lists several things which should happen to him. He says, **For it is a fire that consumes down to Abaddon; it would destroy my entire harvest** (v. 12). Abaddon is seen as a place, perhaps used metaphorically here; but we don't know anything else about it.
 - 4) Psalm 88:10–12 reads: **Do You work wonders for the dead? Do departed spirits rise up to praise You? Selah Will Your faithful love be declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon? Will Your wonders be known in the darkness, or Your righteousness in the land of oblivion?** Again, Abaddon is seen as a place, and a place where God's attributes will not be declared. Again, it is paralleled with *the grave, darkness and the land of oblivion*. This would indicate that we are speaking of a place where God's attributes are not declared, so again it appears to be a place of fallen spirits.
 - 5) Prov. 15:9–11: **The LORD detests the way of the wicked, but He loves the one who pursues righteousness. Discipline is harsh for the one who leaves the path; the one who hates correction will die. Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD--how much more, human hearts.** What is being said here about Sheol and Abaddon is that God can see what is there; God can see the spirits in Sheol and Abaddon (also suggesting that these are different compartment). If God can see that, then he can surely see into our hearts, to know our motivations.
 - 6) Prov. 27:20: **Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and people's eyes are never satisfied..** Although not the point of the verse, Sheol and Abaddon continue to take in souls of the departed. It is as though they are hungry for these souls—ravenous, if you will.
14. We also have the word tach^etîy (תַּחַתִּי) [pronounced *tahkh^e-TEE*], which means *lower, lowest [places], deepest; hidden*. Strong's #8482 BDB #1066. Tach^etîy can be used as an adjective or as a noun. It occurs 19 times in the Old Testament (Gen. 6:16 Ex. 19:17 Deut. 32:22 Joshua 15:19, Judges 1:15 Neh. 4:13 Job. 41:24 Psalm 63:9 86:13 88:6 139:15 Isa. 44:23 ,Lam. 3:55 Ezek. 26:20 31:14, 16 32:18, 24), but we will only examine the passages where it relates to our topic. The remaining passages simply refer to the *lower part* of something.
- 1) To get an idea of the meaning of this word, God told Noah to build an Ark with a *lower*, a second and third deck. My guess is that was the lowest deck? Gen. 6:16
 - 2) Deut. 32:22: **For fire has been kindled because of My anger and burns to the depths of Sheol; it devours the land and its produce, and scorches the foundations of the mountains.** Fire is associated with judgment and anger is the commonly used anthropopathism associated with God's justice. Since Sheol is a place of the dead for the saved and unsaved, *lower* Sheol must be the place of judgment.
 - 3) Psalm 63:9: **But those who seek to destroy my life will go into the depths of the earth.** David rightly speaks of those who are against him. We live in an invisible war, and those who attack the things of God can expect to end up in the depths of the earth (if, of course, they are not saved).
 - 4) Psalm 86:13: **For Your faithful love for me is great, and You deliver my life from the depths of Sheol.** David will not go to the lower part of Sheol, or to the depths of Sheol. This is the compartment for the unsaved as well as the fallen angels.
 - 5) Psalm 88:3–6: **For I have had enough troubles, and my life is near Sheol. I am counted among those going down to the Pit. I am like a man without strength, abandoned among the dead. I am like the slain lying in the grave, whom You no longer remember, and who are cut off from Your care. You have put me in the lowest part of the Pit, in the darkest places, in the depths.** I don't know that we can add information from this passage; this simply expresses deep despair of the soul.
15. We have the pit of destruction that we found in Psalm 55:23. The Hebrew word is b^eêr (בְּעֵר) [pronounced *b^e-AIR*], which means *well, pit*. Strong's #875 BDB #91. It is used for a well, completely apart from our subject more often than not (e.g., Gen. 16:14 21:19, 25). However, there are a few instances when we find this word used in relationship to our topic. We would expect those instances to be the poetic literature, which would take license with the word's meaning.
- 1) Psalm 55:23: **You, God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; men of bloodshed and treachery will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.** This is actually the *pit of the pit*; two different words are used here for pit. Again, we have the concept of another compartment of Sheol (even though the word *Sheol* is not found here).
 - 2) Psalm 103:4: **He redeems your life from the Pit; He crowns you with faithful love and compassion.** Here, the pit refers to being kept from death, as well as from destruction.

16. There is a similar word, which has a very literal meaning as $b^{\text{e}}\hat{e}r$, but also can refer to Sheol; that is the feminine noun *shachath* (שַׁחַת) [pronounced *SHAH-kahth*], which means *pit; corruption, grave; death*. It is rendered *pit, corruption* and *grave* in the KJV. This word literally means *pit* (it is used of the pit or the snare designed to capture animals—Psalm 7:15 9:15). It is used for a cistern, in which there is mud (Job 9:31), for an underground prison (Isa. 51:14); for *graves* or *sepulcher's* (Job 17:14 33:18, 30 Psalm 30:10); and it is used in the sense of *going down to the grave* (Job 33:24 Psalm 55:24). The Greek word used to translate this in Job 17:14 is *death*. Gesenius, apparently, said that this word did not have the connotation of *corruption*; however, Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gives this word the sense of meaning *corruption* (Acts 2:27 13:35). For this reason, perhaps, Barnes, Schultens and Rosenmüller take it in the sense of *corruption, putrefaction*. Strong's #7845 BDB #1001.

- 1) Again, we will stay with the passages which are pertinent to this topic; however, it might be a good idea to get the big picture. We have two different words used to refer to a pit dug in the ground, either for a well or for a grave. Both of these words are also used in reference to Sheol. Again, the implication is, Sheol is in the earth.
- 2) *Shachath* is used most often for the section of Sheol where the unsaved go. It is also frequently used as a metaphor for death—and generally the death of the unbeliever.
- 3) There are a number of passages for this word: Job. 9:31 17:14 33:18, 22, 24, 28, 30 Psalm 7:15 9:15 16:10 30:9 35:7 49:9 55:23 94:13 103:4 Prov. 26:27 Isa. 38:17 51:14 Ezek. 19:4 28:8 Jonah 2:6. Surprisingly, we do not find this word in the historical books nor in the Law, although there would have been ample reason to use it in either category. We find it, instead, in the writings and in the prophets.
- 4) *Shachath* in the wisdom literature.
 - (1) To summarize, there are several passages where Job speaks of God sending him to the pit. Job 9:31 Psalm 30:9. This is simply God testing/disciplining Job (one of the themes of the book of Job), and eventually sending him to the grave.
 - (2) There are also instances where an individual or group is said to dig a pit for themselves, the idea being, *we are our own worst enemy; many of the problems in our life are problems which we cause*. Psalm 7:15 9:15 Prov. 26:27. In these passages, *pit* simply speaks of discipline or death because one is being disciplined.
 - (3) There are passages where others dig a pit for us to fall in. Again, this is more metaphorical than applicable to our topic. Psalm 35:7.
 - (4) Job uses *shachath* as a synonym for Sheol in Job 17:13–16: *If I await Sheol as my home, spread out my bed in darkness, and say to the Pit: You are my father, and to the worm: My mother or my sister, where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? Will it go down to the gates of Sheol, or will we descend together to the dust?*
 - (5) In Job 33, we have Elihu (*not* one of Job's associates), who speaks for God. God speaks time and again, but a person may not notice it. In a dream, a vision in the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber on their beds, He uncovers their ears at that time and terrifies them with warnings, in order to turn a person from his actions and suppress his pride. God spares his soul from the **Pit**, his life from crossing the river of death. A person may be disciplined on his bed with pain and constant distress in his bones, so that he detests bread, and his soul despises his favorite food. His flesh wastes away to nothing, and his unseen bones stick out. He draws near the **Pit**, and his life to the executioners. If there is an angel on his side, one mediator out of a thousand, to tell a person what is right for him and to be gracious to him and say, "Spare him from going down to the **Pit**; I have found a ransom," then his flesh will be healthier than in his youth, and he will return to the days of his youthful vigor. He will pray to God, and God will delight in him. That man will behold His face with a shout of joy, and God will restore his righteousness to him. He will look at men and say, "I have sinned and perverted what was right; yet I did not get what I deserved. He redeemed my soul from going down to the **Pit**, and I will continue to see the light." God certainly does all these things two or three times to a man in order to turn him back from the **Pit**, so he may shine with the light of life. Pay attention, Job, and listen to me. Be quiet, and I will speak. But if you have something to say, answer me; speak, for I would like to justify you. If not, then listen to me; be quiet, and I will teach you

- wisdom (Job 33:14–33). As before, it is clear that *pit* is a synonym for *Sheol*. The latter may be regarded as the proper noun for the place of departed souls. Also notice, the person in this verse would be a believer, as God is speaking to him (or attempting to speak to him³). This passage in general is a passage dealing with redemption and grace. The person under pressure from God has righteousness restored to him, as he has been paid for. Also, note, *he did not get what he deserved!* We deserve death; we deserve the pit; we deserve to be put under eternal punishment—however, we do not get what we deserve.
- (6) The *pit* can refer to the place of Sheol designed for the unbeliever: **For You will not abandon me to Sheol; You will not allow Your Faithful One to see the Pit** (Psalm 16:10). Jesus Christ would not be left in Sheol, the place of departed souls. He would not see the Pit, the place of departed unbelieving souls.
 - (7) Psalm 49 is an incredible passage indicating that there is no way that another mere man can redeem our souls—the cost is too great. **Yet these cannot redeem a person or pay his ransom to God-- since the price of redeeming him is too costly, one should forever stop trying—so that he may live forever and not see the Pit** (Psalm 49:7–9). Pit again stands for the place in Sheol where those there are under eternal judgment.
 - (8) There is a couplet in Psalm 55 contrasting the believer and the unbeliever: **Turn your burdens over to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will never let the righteous person stumble. But you, O God, will throw wicked people into the deepest pit. Bloodthirsty and deceitful people will not live out half their days. But I will trust you** (Psalm 55:22–23). The deepest pit (b^e’êr shachath—two of the words we are studying) is again the reference to the place in Sheol from which there is no redemption.
 - (9) Psalm 94:12–15: **LORD, happy is the man You discipline and teach from Your law to give him relief from troubled times until a pit is dug for the wicked. The LORD will not forsake His people or abandon His heritage, for justice will again be righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.** Here, pit is more metaphorical for the punishment of the wicked who are near to this man of righteousness (imputed righteousness, by the way).
 - (10) Psalm 103:2–4: **My soul, praise the LORD, and do not forget all His benefits. He forgives all your sin; He heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the Pit; He crowns you with faithful love and compassion.** Being redeemed from the pit means being saved from eternal death.
- 5) Shachath is also found in the books of the prophets. It is interesting that we find words depicting eternal punishment in Isaiah and in Ezekiel, but we do not find those same words in Jeremiah (he does use the term *bôwr*, but simply to refer to literal holes dug into the ground—there is no technical usage of any of these words in Jeremiah).
- (1) We have already quoted Isa. 38:17: **For the grave cannot praise You, death can not rejoice in You; they who go down into the pit cannot hope for Your truth.** This is Hezekiah asking for a stay of execution from God—the chance for him to glorify God is past, once he has died. The pit may be taken very technically as the place of Sheol for the unsaved; or it can simply refer to dying. There is no more assimilation of doctrine at the point of death (at least, in such a way that it is rewardable and glorifying to God).
 - (2) Isa 51:12–14: **I—I am the One who comforts you. Who are you that you should fear man who dies, or a son of man who is given up like grass? But you have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. You are in constant dread all day long because of the fury of the oppressor, who has set himself to destroy. But where is the fury of the oppressor? The prisoner is soon to be set free; he will not die and go to the Pit, and his food will not be lacking.** This is Jesus Christ speaking to the believer; to the believer who is concerned about his future. Jesus Christ assures him that he will not die and go into the Pit (in the technical sense).
 - (3) The word *shachath* is used to refer to the judgment of Tyre in Ezek. 28:8: **They will bring you down to the Pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the sea.** We may understand its

³ Now, even though it is clear that God is attempting to communicate to this person in dreams, that was the modus operandi then, but not now.

usage here either in the metaphorical sense (death) or in the technical sense (as a place of departed unbelieving souls). Either works in this passage.

- (4) Recall that Jonah has already made mention of Sheol in Jonah 2:2; he also uses *shachath* in Jonah 2:5–6: *The waters engulfed me up to the neck; the watery depths overcame me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. I sank to the foundations of the mountains; the earth with its prison bars closed behind me forever! But You raised my life from the Pit, LORD my God!* Jonah is thanking God from not letting him die (God raised his life from the Pit) prior to his deliverance.
17. There is one more word for *pit*: *bôwr* (בֹּוֹר) [pronounced *bohrr*], which means *pit, cistern, well*. Strong's #953 BDB #92. Since this word is used more specifically for actual *pits* or *wells*, I will only deal with the passages where it is metaphorically used for Sheol. It occurs 69 times, so I will not list each and every occurrence.
- 1) Psalm 28:1: *LORD, I call to You; my rock, do not be deaf to me. If You remain silent to me, I will be like those going down to the Pit.* Here, David uses *bôwr* as the place where the unbeliever goes after death.
 - 2) Psalm 30:3: *LORD, You brought me up from Sheol; You spared me from among those going down to the Pit.* David thanks God for sparing him and for redeeming him.
 - 3) Psalm 88:1–6: *LORD, God of my salvation, I cry out before You day and night. May my prayer reach Your presence; listen to my cry. For I have had enough troubles, and my life is near Sheol. I am counted among those going down to the Pit [bôr]. I am like a man without strength, abandoned among the dead. I am like the slain lying in the grave, whom You no longer remember, and who are cut off from Your care. You have put me in the lowest part of the Pit [bôr], in the darkest places, in the depths. The sons of Asaph say that they are like those brought down to the pit; that is, their troubles makes them feel as if they are unbelievers.*
 - 4) David prays to God in Psalm 143:7: *Answer me quickly, LORD; my spirit fails. Don't hide Your face from me, or I will be like those going down to the Pit.* As above, David is not going down to the Pit, the place of unbelievers, but he appears by his life to be like one of those going down to the Pit.
 - 5) We find *bôr* used in a less technical sense in Prov. 1:12, when thieves discuss killing a person for their wealth: *Let's swallow them alive, like Sheol, still healthy as they go down to the Pit.*
 - 6) Prov. 28:17: *A man burdened by bloodguilt will be a fugitive until te Pit. Let no one help him.* The writer expects that a man who has killed will be guilty in his own heart until he goes down to the grave—Sheol, or the Pit.
 - 7) Isaiah describes what will happen to unbelieving Israel in Isa. 14:15: *But you will be brought down to Sheol into the deepest regions of the Pit.* These are those who felts they were righteous simply because they were Jews; however, they had not been regenerated by faith in Jehovah Elohim.
 - 8) we have already quote Isa. 38:18: *For Sheol cannot thank You; Death cannot praise You. Those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness.* This is Nehemiah recognizing that in the grave, he would no longer glorify God.
 - 9) Ezek. 26:19–20: For this is what the Lord GOD says: *"When I make you a ruined city like other deserted cities, when I raise up the deep against you so that the mighty waters cover you, then I will bring you down to be with those who descend to the Pit, to the people of antiquity. I will make you dwell in the underworld [or, lower earth] like the ancient ruins, with those who descend to the Pit, so that you will no longer be inhabited or display your splendor in the land of the living.* This is a small portion of God's judgment against Tyre. What we find here is two literal fulfillments: the city itself was put into the sea; and the people—its unbelieving populace—was cast into Sheol, called here the *Pit*, which is in the lower earth. This passage, by the way, is one of the most explicit passages when it comes to describing the actual location of Sheol.
 - 10) Ezek. 31:10–18 is an interesting passage: *"Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Since it became great in height and set its top among the clouds, and it grew proud on account of its height, I determined to hand it over to a ruler of nations; he would surely deal with it. I banished it because of its wickedness. Foreigners, ruthless men from the nations, cut it down and left it lying. Its limbs fell on the mountains and in every valley; its boughs lay broken in all the earth's ravines. All the peoples of the earth left its shade and abandoned it. All the birds of the sky nested on its fallen trunk, and all the animals of the field were among its boughs. This happened so that no trees planted beside water*

would become great in height and set their tops among the clouds, and so that no other well-watered trees would reach them in height. For they have all been consigned to death, to the underworld, among the people who descend to the Pit. "This is what the Lord GOD says: I caused grieving on the day the cedar went down to Sheol. I closed off the underground deep because of it: I held back the rivers of the deep, and its abundant waters were restrained. I made Lebanon mourn on account of it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. I made the nations quake at the sound of its downfall, when I threw it down to Sheol to be with those who descend to the Pit. Then all the trees of Eden, all the well-watered trees, the choice and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the underworld. They too descended with it to Sheol, to those slain by the sword. As its allies they had lived in its shade among the nations. "Who then are you like in glory and greatness among Eden's trees? You also will be brought down to the underworld to be with the trees of Eden. You will lie among the uncircumcised with those slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his hordes"--the declaration of the Lord GOD. It is a judgment made against the great nation of Assyria. Earlier in this chapter, Assyria is compared to a great cedar of Lebanon (Ezek. 31:3–7). At one time, this was a huge empire, compassing much of the middle east (much of northern Iraq and northern Syria); and an empire, from all descriptions, which was beautiful and prosperous. This passage describes its destruction, as a huge tree which is cut to the ground and left lying; and no nation would reach its height. However, what we are concerned with is, the inhabitants of Assyria went down to Sheol and descended into the Pit.

- 11) We find *bôr* in Ezek. 32:18, 23–25, 29–30; and it speaks of various enemies of Israel who have been slain, fallen by the sword, who die as unbelievers, going down to the lowest parts of the earth, the pit (see v. 25 for instance).
 - 12) Zech. 9:11, when taken in context, may refer more to the restoration of Israel than to those in the Pit being released (And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem. And the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. You also, by the blood of Your covenant I have freed Your prisoners out of the pit in which is no water. Turn to the stronghold, prisoners of hope; even today I declare that I will return to you double—Zech. 9:10–12). There could be a double fulfillment, which is not unusual for Old Testament prophecy.
18. The related Greek words: Hades (ᾍδης) [pronounced *HAD-days*], which is transliterated *Hades* and stands for the place of departed spirits. This is almost the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *Sheol*; the primary difference is, *Sheol* can refer to the place of all departed souls; *Hades* is primarily used only for the unsaved dead (1Cor. 15:55 being the exception). Strong's #86.
- 1) Hades is found in only a few New Testament passages: Matt. 11:23 16:18 Luke 10:15 16:23 Acts 2:27, 31 1Cor. 15:55 Rev. 1:18 6:8 20:13-14
 - 2) Matt. 11:23: "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until today. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." (this is also Luke 10:15). Here, *Hades* is not used technically, as all those in a city are not cast into hell, nor is the city itself cast into hell. The idea here is, Jesus did a lot of works in Capernaum; however, their response, in general, will be with negative volition. What remains for them will be death and destruction, which is in direct opposition to being exalted to heaven.
 - 3) Matt. 16:18: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces [lit., gates] of Hades will not overpower it." Again, *Hades* is not used in the technical sense as the place of departed spirits, but to indicate the power of death and destruction. The Church of Jesus Christ will stand against the power of the demon forces.
 - 4) By the way, we find the phrase *the gates of Sheol* in several passages (even though your Bible may not render it in that way). The gates of the city represented the strength and power of that city. They also, more obviously, represent entrance into the city.
 - 5) One of the passages which reveals to us some of the greatest truths about Hades is Luke 16:19–31: "There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was left at his gate. He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man's table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. One day the poor

man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. 'Father Abraham!' he called out, 'Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!' "'Son,' Abraham said, 'remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us.' "'Father,' he said, 'then I beg you to send him to my father's house--because I have five brothers--to warn them, so they won't also come to this place of torment.' "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' "'No, father Abraham,' he said. 'But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "But he told him, 'If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'" First of all, this is not a parable. Jesus never gave names to those in His parables. There are two compartments: one is at Abraham's side and the other is called *torment in Hades* here. Between the two compartments is a fixed great chasm. Abraham is conscious and allowed to speak to the rich man; the rich man is fully conscious and is complaining. He also has concerns for his own brothers who are still alive and on the earth, indicating that he has memory function.

- 6) Peter, at Pentecost, quoted and explained one of our passages: **For David says of Him: I saw the Lord ever before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced. Moreover my flesh will rest in hope, because You will not leave my soul in Hades, or allow Your Holy One to see decay** (Acts 2:25–27). And then Peter explained the passage: "Brothers, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing this in advance, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: **He was not left in Hades, and His flesh did not experience decay. God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this.**" (Acts 2:29–32). David was a prophet, speaking of Jesus; David did not speak of himself; he was still in the grave. But Jesus did not remain in Hades (indicating that he was there at one time); His flesh did not see the Pit (nor did it experience decay).
- 7) 1Cor. 15:55: **Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?** Paul is quoting Hosea 13:14, which promises that Hades will not have victory over us, as Jesus has redeemed us from sin and death.⁴
- 8) When Jesus speaks to John, He introduces Himself: **"Don't be afraid. I am the first and the last, and the Living one. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. I have the keys of Death and of Hades"** (Rev. 1:17b–18). Because Jesus is the firstborn from the dead and because He redeemed us by the cross, He holds the keys to death and Hades.
- 9) Rev. 6:8: **And behold, a pale horse, and he who sat on it, his name was Death. Hades followed with him. Authority over one fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine, with death, and by the wild animals of the earth was given to him.** Death and Hades are personified here in John's vision and

they are given the authority to strike the earth and to kill many. This also implies that Hades is still there.

- 10) Rev. 20:11–15: **I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. There was found no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and they opened books. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. They**



⁴ It is possible that the better manuscripts have **Death, where is your string? Death, where is your victory?** Even so, this is a quotation of Hosea 13:14, where we find the word Sheol.

were judged, each one according to his works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. If anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. Here, we find the last mention of Death and Hades, here, at the very end of the book of Revelation. It is the Great White Throne judgment executed by Jesus Christ. All of the dead stand before this throne. Those who are found mentioned in the book of life were saved and those whose names were not found there was cast into the Lake of Fire (which would be all of the unregenerate inhabitants of Hades).

11) Knowing the truth about what Hades is, it might be interesting to know what the Greeks thought about Hades: *Hades was not, in the mind of the ancients, the same as Hell: All the dead went there. Passage into the land of the dead required the crossing of the River Styx. The infamous ferry man, Charon, demanded tolls of arriving shades. Those who could not pay had to wander the banks of the river for a century before he took pity on them and brought them across. The gods could arrange for eternal punishment of those who annoyed them. Most souls, however, merely wandered about the place, bored for all of eternity. Hades may have inspired the Christian Limbo.*⁵ By the way, the true doctrine of Hades is what inspired the false Greek notions of Hades. For all that is truth in Scripture, there will be a corresponding perversion spawned by mankind.

19. The abyss:

- 1) The Greek word is the feminine noun abussos (ἄβυσσος) [pronounced *AHB-oos-soss*], which means *abyss, the deep, a depthless place, the bottomless pit*; and is transliterated *abyss*. Strong's #12.
- 2) The Greeks saw the Abyss as being a holding place for fallen angels. At least, this seems to be what I can glean from the internet. This would match our understanding of this term as well.
- 3) What might be reasonably asked is, do fallen men and demons share the same space? It is not clear, but death and Hades do give up the dead in the end times, which includes demons.
- 4) We find this word used in Luke 8:31 Rom. 10:7 Rev. 9:1-2, 11 11:7 17:8 20:1, 3
- 5) In Luke 8, Jesus is dealing with a large number of demons who do not want Him to throw them into the Abyss. This is in line with some fallen angels being in the Abyss. Remember, there are angels there in the Abyss; probably those from Gen. 6 (2Peter 2:4).
- 6) Paul alludes to the Abyss as part of a logical argument in Rom. 8.
- 7) In Rev. 9, the 5th trumpet sounds and the Abyss is opened; and the one coming out of the Abyss is called the destroyer, the angel who is king over them. Rev. 9:1–12
- 8) The Beast will come out of the Abyss and destroy the two witnesses of God. Rev. 11:7
- 9) The Beast and the Abyss are mentioned again together, with some explanation in Rev. 17:8.
- 10) The Dragon, Satan, is thrown back into the Abyss for 1000 years. Rev. 20:1–3

20. Paradise:

- 1) Our understanding of paradise is rather limited. Paradise is where the souls and spirits of believers go after dying (as their bodies go into the earth). The Greek word is *paradeisos* (παράδεισος) [pronounced *pawr-AHD-ī-soss*], which is transliterated *paradise* and means *park, garden, Eden grove*. This was the word used by the Greeks to describe an enclosed ancient park, which would be well-watered, with trees, shrubs, flowers and fountains; and often inhabited by wild animals which could be hunted. We may at least understand this as, we, as believers who die after the resurrection, go to a place which would be similar to going to a beautiful, refreshing and restful park on earth while in our human bodies. Strong's #3857.
- 2) What sort of physical movement is available to us or physical activities is really unknown; however, if you have ever had a dream of a place of peace, where you were comfortable and satisfied, this might be akin to paradise (as our bodies during sleep remain relatively stationary).
- 3) There are only three New Testament passages which mention paradise. The first is well-known to most believers: Jesus, when on the cross, promised the thief who believed in Him, **And He said to him, "I assure you: Today you will be with Me in paradise."** (Luke 23:43).
- 4) Now, remember that I just told you that our physical movement is not known to us. Paul was in paradise, and one thing which he was not aware of was, whether or not he was actually in his body or not. 2Cor. 12:2: **I know a man in Christ who was caught up into the third heaven 14 years ago.**

⁵ Taken directly from <http://www.alsirat.com/deathlore/afterlives/hades.html>. The image is from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Underworld.jpg>. This image has been released into the public domain by the copyright holder, its copyright has expired, or it is ineligible for copyright. This applies worldwide.

Whether he was in the body or out of the body, I don't know; God knows. I know that this man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into paradise. He heard inexpressible words, which a man is not allowed to speak. In a dream, I feel as though I am in a body and have full, unrestrained physical movement (except in some bad dreams). However, my body is right there in the same place, in my bed. So I offer this as analogous to Paul's experience. At the time I feel that I am in a body, capable of physical movement; yet, afterward, I realize I did not move at all. Therefore, if Paul was in paradise, and if he is the foremost Apostle of the Church Age, and if he did not know whether or not he was in a body when in paradise, then, doggone it, I don't think I know either. Furthermore, apart from the word *paradise*, we know very little about this experience, as Paul does not elaborate. Whether this is separate from Abraham's bosom or not is not really clear to us. The usage of the word *heaven* would suggest that it is. The first heaven is the throne room of God; the second heaven is the atmosphere and the universe; and Paul went to the third heaven—which again, is left as a mystery to us.

- 5) In Rev. 2:7 we read: "Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give the victor the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." The garden (paradise) of the first two passages does not have to be the same as the garden in this passage.
21. This leads us to the Catholic notion of limbo which is a perversion of true Christian doctrine. *Limbo describes the temporary status of the souls of good persons who died before the resurrection of Jesus and the permanent status of the unbaptised who die in infancy (without having committed any personal sins but without having been freed from original sin).*⁶ Limbo interestingly enough is not a part of official Catholic doctrine; however, purgatory (see below) is.
22. Since we are on this topic, it might be beneficial to mention purgatory. Purgatory is a Catholic notion, unsupported by Scripture, as a place where people go if they die with unconfessed sins in their lives. What I have here from the internet should be sufficient information: *The idea of damning any unconfessed sinner, no matter how petty the offense, bothered Medieval Christians so much that they came up with the idea of this middle place between Hell and Heaven where the lesser sinners spent some time in its purifying fires before advancing to the New Jerusalem. Protestants rejected Purgatory in small part because it was not Biblical and in large part because it fed papal power and wealth through the sale of masses for the quick release of souls. Modern Catholics still address prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and other saints on behalf of friends and relatives trapped here. They believe these prayers speed the release of those who are neither damned nor yet saved. Purgatory has its torments, but the souls there know that these will end following a sufficiently long period of contrition, measured in the thousands or tens of thousands of years.*⁷ This is a distortion of the true concept of Hades.
23. And while we are on the subject of false doctrine, let us turn to the book of Enoch in the Apocrypha. Enoch took a tour down to the center of the earth and observed that Hades was broken down into four compartments: (1) the saintly martyrs, (2) the ordinary righteous people, (3) the wicked who did not receive enough punishment on this earth, and (4) sinners who suffered a violent death.⁸ You can see how his view of Hades reeks of legalism (and why the book of Enoch is not a part of the canon of Scripture). To Enoch's credit, he also tells us the Hades is broken down into two compartments: bliss and the valley of Gehinnom (i.e., Gehenna).⁹ Even though the Bible presents a fairly grisly picture of those who pass on without Jesus Christ, some apocalyptic literature took it one step further: the 4th book of the Sibylline Oracles (probably written by Alexandrian Essences) reads: *His angels will scourge them with fiery chains, and cast them before the fierce monsters of hell, and fiery wheels will turn them round about.*¹⁰ Ouch!
24. The next Greek word, which we find used only one time is *tartaroō* (ταρταρώ) [pronounced *tar-tar-OH-oh*], and it means *to cast into hell* or *to cast into Tartaros, to consign to Tartaros, to hold captive in Tartaros*. This verb is only found in 2Peter 2:4 and the related substantive is not found in the New Testament: *tartaros* (τάρταρος) [pronounced *TAHR-tahr-oss*]. *Tartaros* was thought by the Greeks to be a *subterranean region*,

⁶ Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbo>

⁷ Taken directly from <http://www.alsirat.com/deathlore/afterlives/purgatory.html>

⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid

doleful and dark, regarded as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds.¹¹ Tartaros is found in the psuedepigraphal book Enoch as the place where fallen angels are confined.¹² Strong's #5020.

- 1) There are Greek myths and there are Greek myths. Most Greek mythology is a distortion of the truth; the Greek gods who come down and commingle with human females is in line with Gen. 6; many of the details are not. So, there is some truth in what they believe, which is true of almost all philosophies and religions, no matter how bankrupt (many can, for instance, prescribe a life of morality, even though the person who follows this life will spend eternity in hell for not believing in Jesus Christ). The Greeks believed in Hades, which is a true place (although the Greeks distorted the notion of Hades). They also correctly identified Tartaros as being a portion of Hades, although, no doubt, some of their ideas were mixed up on this notion as well.
 - 2) In any case, we find the verb one time in Scripture: **For if God didn't spare the angels who sinned, but threw them down into Tartarus** and delivered them to be kept in chains of darkness until judgment; and if He didn't spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others, when He brought a flood on the world of the ungodly; and if He reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes and condemned them to ruin, making them an example to those who were going to be ungodly; and if He rescued righteous Lot, distressed by the unrestrained behavior of the immoral (for as he lived among them, that righteous man tormented himself day by day with the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, especially those who follow the polluting desires of the flesh and despise authority. Bold, arrogant people! They do not tremble when they blaspheme the glorious ones; however, angels, who are greater in might and power, do not bring a slanderous charge against them before the Lord. But these people, like irrational animals--creatures of instinct born to be caught and destroyed--speak blasphemies about things they don't understand, and in their destruction they too will be destroyed, suffering harm as the payment for unrighteousness. They consider it a pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, delighting in their deceptions as they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and always looking for sin, seducing unstable people, and with hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! By abandoning the straight path, they have gone astray and have followed the path of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but received a rebuke for his transgression: a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These people are springs without water, mists driven by a whirlwind. The gloom of darkness has been reserved for them. For uttering bombastic, empty words, they seduce, by fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, since people are enslaved to whatever defeats them (2Peter 2:4–19). The short explanation is, God knows how to deliver the righteous and to punish the wicked. Peter gives several illustrations of this, including the placing of angels in chains of darkness in Tartaros.
25. We have one word which is found in both the Old and New Testaments: Gehenna.
- 1) In the Old Testament the Hebrew is In the Hebrew, this looks slightly different than simply the combination of the nouns, as the first two words are constructs: Gêy Ben-Hinnom (גַּי בְּנֵי-חִינּוֹם) [pronounced *gay-ben-hin-NOHM*], which means *Valley of the sons of Hinnom*. Strong's #1516 BDB #161, Strong's #1121 BDB #119, Strong's #2011 BDB #244.
 - 2) This is a valley which originally marked one of the boundaries of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:8 18:16).
 - 3) However, this valley was later associated with child sacrifice and demon worship (2Kings 23:10 2Chron. 28:3 33:6 Jer. 7:30–32 19:6 32:35).
 - 4) During intertestamental times, this place became known as the *Valley of Hinnom* (or *gay-hin-NOHM*), which is transliterated *Gehenna* in our English and in the Greek looks like this: Geenna (Γέεννα)

¹¹ Taken directly from Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the Old Testament, American Book Company, ©1889, p. 615.

¹² Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*; AMG Publishers; ©1992, p. 1367.

- [pronounced *GEH-en-nah*]. This word is sometimes transliterated *Gehenna*; sometimes translated *hell*; and comes from the Hebrew *Valley [of the sons] of Hinnom*. Strong's #1067.
- 5) God pronounced judgment over this area because of the sacrifices made to false Gods: Jer 7:30–33: "For the Judæans have done what is evil in My sight." This is the LORD's declaration. "They have set up their detestable things in the house that is called by My name and defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom in order to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, a thing I did not command; I never entertained the thought. "Therefore, take note! Days are coming"--the LORD's declaration--"when this place will no longer be called Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. Topheth will become a cemetery, because there will be no other burial place. The corpses of these people will become food for the birds of the sky and for the wild animals of the land, with no one to scare them off."
 - 6) Furthermore, what appears to have occurred during inter-testament times is, this place was used to burn refuse as well as the bodies of criminals. By the prophecies pronounced by God and through the use of the Valley of Gehenna to burn material and human refuse, Gehenna began to be seen as a picture of the final punishment for the enemies of God.
 - 7) Gehenna is found a dozen times in the New Testament. However, it is only found in four books: Matthew, Mark, Luke and James; an interesting grouping.
 - 8) Gehenna is found thrice in the sermon on the mount. A person who speaks harshly against his brother is subject to the fire of Gehenna (Matt. 5:22). In Matt. 5:28–29, Jesus tells His disciples, if they look on a woman with lust, they have committed adultery and that it would be better to pluck out their offending eye than it would for them to have the entire bodies cast into Gehenna fire. If your hand is an offending member—i.e., if your hand sins—then but your hand off; better that, than have your entire body thrown into Gehenna fire (or *hell fire*). Matt. 18:8–9 and Mark 9:43, 45 carry essentially the same message.
 - 9) Let me add what Mark included from what Jesus said: **And if your eye causes your downfall, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched** (Mark 9:47–48 Isa. 66:24b).
 - 10) In Matt. 10:28 (and Luke 12:5), Jesus tells His disciples: **And do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.** If there is any doubt in the previous verses as to the reference, there should be none here. The very worst that man can do is kill your body. No man can kill your soul. Only God can do that.
 - 11) Matt. 23:15: **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and the dry land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of Gehenna than yourselves.** The scribes and Pharisees who manage to convert one over to them are simply making this person a child of hell. In our English, they may seem moderately tame, but if you stood before a congregation of Jehovah Witnesses and told them that they were almost all going to hell, that would be a very similar approach. Our Lord tells the scribes and Pharisees that they will not escape the condemnation of Gehenna in Matt. 23:29–33 a little later in this same sermon.
 - 12) The final time we find Gehenna in the New Testament is in James 3:6: **The tongue is that kind of flame. It is a world of evil among the parts of our bodies, and it completely contaminates our bodies. The tongue sets our lives on fire, and is itself set on fire from hell.** The tongue is related to Gehenna fire.
 - 13) Some make a distinction between Gehenna and Hades. They see Hades as the place where departed souls go prior to the final judgment of Jesus Christ, and Gehenna being the final place of abode. This is quite reasonable, as judgment in the gospels is clearly tied to Gehenna.
26. The Lake of Fire:
- 1) The Lake of Fire is only found in four passages, all of which are in Revelation (Rev. 19:20 20:10, 14, 15). This is the final place of judgment. Men are judged for their works, and, if their name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, they are cast into the Lake of Fire, along with the devil, the beast and the false prophet.
 - 2) Rev. 19:20: **But the beast was taken prisoner, and along with him the false prophet, who had performed signs on his authority, by which he deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast and**

those who worshiped his image. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. At the end of time, the Beast and the False Prophet are both tossed into the Lake of Fire. Note that they are thrown *alive* into the Lake of Fire.

- 3) Rev 20:10–15: The Devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. Again, this passage is at the beginning of eternity—Satan and his demon force had been released from prison for a very short time, following the Millennium, and this is where they are thrown into their final place of abode, the Lake of Fire, where they will suffer forever. For those who think that this is too harsh, please realize that Satan only seeks to reek havoc on this earth when he is released for a time from his prison (Rev. 20:1–9).
 - 4) The final mention of the Lake of Fire is in Rev. 21:8: **But the cowards, unbelievers, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."**
27. Now that we know about Sheol/Hades, Tartaros, Gehenna, and the Lake of Fire, we can now turn to the Greek word *pûr* (πίρ) [pronounced *purr*], which means *fire*. Strong's #4442.
- 1) First of all, most of the time, this word refers to literal fire (e.g., Luke 22:55 1Peter 1:7).
 - 2) However, that literal fire can also be used to represent the fire which will consume the world in the end times: **"Therefore just as the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom everything that causes sin and those guilty of lawlessness. They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** (Matt. 13:40–42). We have a very similar parable in Matt. 13:47–50, with the same sort of result: **The angels will take the wicked out from the righteous and cast them into a furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** This invokes the question, is this separate from the Lake of Fire? That is, there are several passages which we will examine where the world will be burned up with fire; is this the Lake of Fire?
 - (1) By the way, the angels are also mentioned in Heb. 1:7 and Psalm 104:4 as **His servants [who are] a fiery flame.**
 - 3) Fire can refer in general to the final judgment of unbelievers: Rom. 12:20–21 (quoting Prov. 25:21–22): **But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.** If your personal enemy is an unbeliever, then every act of kindness given him will result in fire for him (or her) at the last judgment.
 - 4) Fire is used for judgment against those who disobey Jesus Christ (by not believing in Him) in 2Thess. 1:8 as well.
 - 5) Fire is clearly used for the Lake of Fire in Matt. 25:41: **Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!'** This is, of course, the Lake of Fire, where God will toss the devil and his angels.
 - 6) 2Peter 3:7: **But by the same word the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.** The present earth and heavens will be burned and a new heavens and new earth formed; and it will be in the day of the judgment and destruction of the ungodly.
 - 7) The fire and sulphur brought down from heaven onto Sodom and Gomorrah in order to illustrate the final judgment of fire against unbelievers. Jude 7: **In the same way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them committed sexual immorality and practiced perversions, just as they did, and serve as an example by undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.** See also Rev. 9:17–18.

- 8) Fire is used to evaluate the work of believers; if their production is gold, silver and precious stone, that production will remain; if they have produced wood, hay and stubble, that work will be burned up, even though the believer will be saved, so as through fire (1Cor. 1:10–15).
28. There are several other words related to Sheol, Hades and the Lake of Fire: judgment, wrath, destruction and perdition; however, we will save those for another study.
29. However, I should mention the view of the early church fathers.¹³ Although it is difficult to pin down the ante-Nicene fathers on this point, the post-Nicene fathers generally agreed the believers who died before Christ were kept into Hades until Christ died for us on the cross; they were then transported to Paradise, which was either a higher part of Hades or a lower section of heaven. Where they had been kept at first was later named Limbus Patrum (Limbo). Paradise was not quite the highest heaven, which the Catholics later designated as Purgatory.
30. Jim Rickard on Sheol:
- 1) The noun SHEOL, שְׁאוֹל, (KJV – Hell), is transliterated directly into English. It means, “The world of the dead, Sheol, the grave, death, the depths, etc.” The word describes the underworld but usually in the sense of the grave and is most often translated as grave.
 - 2) SHEOL, also called HADES in the Greek, is a place located below the earth’s surface. All OT people would descend to Sheol when they died, Gen 37:35; Job 7:9; Ezek 31:15, 17; 32:27.
 - 3) However, the flattering conspirators Korah, Dathan and Abiram were sent to Sheol while they were still alive, Num 16:33; cf. Ps. 55:15).
 - 4) Sheol, just as the “two edged sword” in verse 4, is also personified as a large mouth in which to swallow its inhabitants, Isa 5:14. Prov 1:12.
 - 5) The Wisdom Literature affirms that God delivers those from Sheol who fear Him (believe in Him), cf. Psa 86:13.
 - 6) The path of the wise person steers him away from Sheol, Prov 15:24, while discipline also prevents a rebellious child from suffering such a miserable fate, Prov 23:14.
 - 7) Sheol had two compartments, 1) the Place of Torments, and 2) Paradise a.k.a., Abraham’s Bosom, Luke 16:19-31.
 - 8) Upon the Resurrection of our Lord, he led the believers in Paradise to heaven, Eph 4:8, where they now reside, along with all believers who have died since.
 - 9) Today, Sheol / Hades has only one compartment where all unbelievers of all time will reside until the Great White Throne Judgment Seat of our Lord, Rev. 20:13. Then those whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire, known as the Second Death, in order to suffer eternal torment with Satan and his minions, Rev 20:14f.¹⁴
31. Some summary points:
- 1) There are two compartments to Sheol; at Abraham’s side and in torments.¹⁵ This is where all the believers from the Old Testament and all unbelievers can be found.
 - 2) Hades is the Greek word for Sheol and it refers to this temporary holding cell. According to the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus was comforted in Hades and the rich man was in misery.
 - 3) Now, we are certain of the two compartments of Hades. It appears that there is a third compartment, the Abyss, where certain fallen angels are kept. This is also known as Tartaros.
 - 4) There is never any suggestion to the idea that the body and soul just burn up into nothingness or that any sort of soul sleep occurs (our soul, by the way, never sleeps). When Scripture is specific, we have phrases like where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48) and Isa 66:24: **"As they leave, they will see the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their maggots will never die, their fire will never go out, and they will be a horror to all mankind."** Recall in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man spoke of being in agony (Luke 16:23–24, 28). See also Rev. 19:20. The devil, the beast and the false prophet are tormented each and every day forever and

¹³ This point comes from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 8.

¹⁴ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-5/> accessed August 23, 2015.

¹⁵ By the way, the word *torments* is only found in Matt. 4:24 Luke 16:23, 28. The Matthew passage s related to a person with a disease or affliction.

ever in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10).¹⁶ Furthermore, recall that we have Hades, which is a holding place for all of the departed souls until the great judgment, both believers and unbelievers. The story of Lazarus and the rich man indicates that the rich man was in great suffering; bear in mind that this suffering continues until the final judgment, when death and Hades are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14).

- 5) Believers since the beginning of the Church Age can be found face to face with Jesus Christ in an interim body.¹⁷ Although it is not completely clear to me where that is, from a physical standpoint; we will be bodily resurrected from there. It is not clear to me where we are at death, apart from being face to face with the Lord. And, to Paul, who was there, and came back to tell us about it, it was not clear to him whether he was even in his body or not.
- 6) Jesus Christ associates the final judgment with Gehenna fire, or *hell fire*, if you will.
- 7) The final judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium, after Satan is released for a short time.
- 8) The final judgment is the Lake of Fire, and we do not know exactly how this differs from Hades in terms of a personal misery. However, Satan will be loosed from Hades for a time after the Millennium and then he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, along with the beast and the false prophet and anyone else whose name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The abbreviated doctrine below is equivalent to the summary points above.

Here are a few points on the Doctrine of Sheol.

The Abbreviated Doctrine of Sheol

1. There are two compartments to Sheol; at Abraham's side and in torments.¹ This is where all the believers from the Old Testament and all unbelievers can be found.
2. Hades is the Greek word for Sheol and it refers to this temporary holding cell. According to the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus was comforted in Hades and the rich man was in misery.
3. Now, we are certain of the two compartments of Hades. It appears that there is a third compartment, the Abyss, where certain fallen angels are kept. This is also known as Tartarus.
4. There is never any suggestion to the idea that the body and soul just burn up into nothingness or that any sort of soul sleep occurs (our soul, by the way, never sleeps). When Scripture is specific, we have phrases like where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48) and Isa 66:24: "**As they leave, they will see the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their maggots will never die, their fire will never go out, and they will be a horror to all mankind.**" Recall in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man spoke of being in agony (Luke 16:23–24, 28). See also Rev. 19:20. The devil, the beast and the false prophet are tormented each and every day forever and ever in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10).² Furthermore, recall that we have Hades, which is a holding place for all of the departed souls until the great judgment, both believers and unbelievers. The story of Lazarus and the rich man indicates that the rich man was in great suffering; bear in mind that this suffering continues until the final judgment, when death and Hades are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14).
5. Believers since the beginning of the Church Age can be found face to face with Jesus Christ in an interim body.³ Although it is not completely clear to me where that is, from a physical standpoint; we will be bodily resurrected from there. It is not clear to me where we are at death, apart from being face to face with the Lord. And, to Paul, who was there, and came back to tell us about it, it was not clear to him whether he was even in his body or not.
6. Jesus Christ associates the final judgment with Gehenna fire, or *hell fire*, if you will.
7. The final judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium, after Satan is released for a short time.
8. The final judgment is the Lake of Fire, and we do not know exactly how this differs from Hades in terms

¹⁶ Although I have quoted all of these passages already, this is one sticking point for some apostate organizations; therefore, these passages bear repetition.

¹⁷ To be honest, I have not personally studied this interim body situation. I am basis this on the ministries of R.B. Thieme Jr. and III. Recall that in 2Cor. 12:2, Paul was caught up into the 3rd heaven, and was unsure whether he was in his body or not while there.

The Abbreviated Doctrine of Sheol

of a personal misery. However, Satan will be loosed from Hades for a time after the Millennium and then he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, along with the beast and the false prophet and anyone else whose name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The Complete **Doctrine of Sheol** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

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