

SECTION ONE: THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Chapter Two—WELCOME TO SHEOL

**Welcome to “SHEOL”—
That is—the study of Sheol**

TRANSLATIONS

The singular most important word in the Hebrew Scriptures which designates the place of conscious existence of the spiritual nature of man after physical death is the word “Sheol.” We shall see that at least seven times “departed spirits” are said to be in “Sheol.” *Sheol* is not the only word in the Hebrew Scriptures used in this regard, but it is the first and primary one. For our examination, therefore, I will list all the passages wherein that particular word is used. You can go back and read the context for each passage as you have time and interest. As we go along we will note other words and descriptions of Sheol that are used in the same context. We will study them carefully because they add to and complement any conclusion to be made. In fact, I will not make a formal definition of Sheol until we have concluded our survey of its use in the Hebrew Scriptures. After this investigation I think there should be no doubt in anyone’s mind as to its meaning.

Recently I opened a web site by a reputable Seventh Day Adventist organization. They stated rather emphatically that “Sheol” simply means “grave.” What they should have said, if they were at all honest about the subject, is that some people have translated the word on *certain occasions* as “grave,” but this is not at all the primary definition that Hebrew lexicons give. Nor could it possibly be the definition if, as I have stated before, the Greek word “Hades” was its equivalent.

Due to the translators of the King James Version of the Bible, a lot of unnecessary confusion was caused. The same word *Sheol* is used 65 (some say 66) times in the Hebrew text and the King James translators rendered it “Hell” 31 times, the “grave” 31 times and the “Pit” 3 times. There is actually no firm basis for these differences other than the translators’ perceptions and/or what appear to be superficial presumptions. Remember, as I stated earlier, the Hebrew translators rendered the word into Greek almost always by the Greek word *Hades*. To the Hebrew translators, this word is nearly consistently understood to carry the modern meaning of our present “Hell.” However, other English translators, even some modern ones, fumbled as well, if not worse (namely the New International Version) than the King James translators.

However, the Revised Version and the American Revised Version of 1901 caught and arrested the error. The New American Standard Bible and the New Revised Standard Version continue to set the pattern for consistently transliterating the word into English as “Sheol.” These are excellent translations of the Hebrew Scriptures. By doing this, the revisers were extremely helpful to those reading the sacred text, because in truth and by

the Holy Spirit's illumination, as we shall see, there is uniformity as to its meaning. All the passages consistently refer to the same place and condition.

In addition, the various Jewish translations have returned to the actual Hebrew word "Sheol" in their English translations as well. (Why the N.I.V. did not translate correctly, I and others do not know.)

It is interesting to note the gradual change in the Jewish translations away from the supposition left by the King James Version of 1611. In 1853 Isaac Leeser made his translation for the English speaking Jewish world. He lowered the rendering of "Sheol" as "grave" (or "tomb" once) to only 16 times and raised up the rendering as "Nether World (world beneath), Hell, the Deep or Perdition" some 46 times, and "Pit" the remaining 3 times. In 1917 the Jewish Publication Society made a New Translation and maintained approximately the same division—"Grave" or "Pit" 18 times, and Nether World" or "Sheol" 47 times. Then the Jewish publication Society made another New Translation between 1962 and 1982, and consistently rendered the word as "Sheol" (or "Nether World" once) 64 times, and "grave" only once. In Israel they have recently published a Hebrew-English translation called *The Jerusalem Bible*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem, 1997 and have done the same—"Sheol" (or "Nether Word" once) a total of 63 times, and "grave" only twice. The translators have thus made a full circle back to the Septuagint translation of some 200 B.C. wherein the Jewish scholars rendered "Sheol" into Greek as "Hades" (Hell) 62 times, "death" twice and "plundered" once. Never did they render it "grave." As any Hebrew lexicon will tell you, "grave" in the Hebrew has its own separate and distinct word—*queber*.

Since it is obvious to every reader of the Bible that this word "Sheol" is loaded with the most deeply sensitive intimations, they felt it best to simply render it the same and thus allow the reader to make up his own mind and conviction as to the meaning. At least the Hebrew translators of the Scriptures into the Greek language nearly uniformly translated Sheol as Hades in the Septuagint translation, and we would do well to recognize that uniformity. They most certainly lived closer to the understood meaning and doctrine inherent in that Hebrew word as used in context.

Oh yes, theologians and miscellaneous religious groups have debated different ideas as to how they think this word can be translated. Some have commonly wanted to always call it "the grave." That, however, is obviously impossible in many cases as we shall see. In addition, as I stated before, there is clearly another Hebrew word for grave, namely *queber*, and "Sheol" has different properties which I will show at the conclusion. Consequently some, realizing these different properties, have selected the idea of "gravedom" or "deathdom" for the understanding of *Sheol*. We shall see later that none of these maneuvers will work with consistency.

Etymology of the word "Sheol"

The etymology of the Hebrew word *she'ol* is understood by some prominent Hebraists as taken from *sa'al*, which means simply "to ask." Also in light of the context of some of the references where it is used (like Prov. 27:20 & 30:15,16), it means "to ask for" in the sense of being "*never satisfied*" or "*insatiable*." If this be the case, then "to ask" became a name for this place of the dead.

Another strong suggestion is found in the Hebrew Lexicon by Gesenius. He believes it may be taken from the Hebrew word *so'al*, which means “a hollow.” This, he says, fits the idea of a subterranean “hollow” or gathering place for the souls of the dead. If this definition is correct then “a hollow (place)” becomes the definition or origin of the word “Sheol.”

Because of the immediate association of “Sheol” nearly always with death, some have been led to conclude that it means nothing more than “the grave,” at least on some occasions. This, of course, turns a deaf ear to all other contextual facts associated with this realm of the dead. As I stated earlier, the Jewish translators of 200 B.C. never translated the word as “grave.”

Perhaps we can only make a complete and accurate assessment of the meaning of this place called “Sheol” after a careful review of its use in the Scriptures. We will go through the Scriptures where Sheol is found. As we go we will be making assessments. In addition, I will list these references sometimes taking into consideration a literal interlinear of the Hebrew text for accuracy’s sake.

It is amazing to me that one writer who supposedly gave an exhaustive research on the subject of Hell, at least from the perspective of the “Conditionalist” position, and whose work is sometimes considered the “definitive” work on the subject, will actually spend the vast majority of his research on what *others have said about the subject*, and then make what amounts to be a very shallow investigation of what the Scriptures themselves actually say. Sometimes people consider this Biblical scholarship. This amounts to being scholarship all right, but only on what “everybody else” says about Hell. This is certainly not scholarship on the Biblical exegesis of the subject. I can assure you the conclusion of that kind of investigation can and will be very confusing and totally misleading.

SHEOL OF THE BOOK OF JOB

We are going to start our investigation with the book of Job. Many people don’t realize that the book of Job is thought by many Biblical scholars and Bible students to be the oldest book in the Hebrew canon. Though it is true that Moses was inspired to write about the original creation of Adam and Eve and the beginnings of civilization, yet it is a fact that Moses did not put his hand to the pen until about 1500 B.C. with the exodus of Israel out of Egypt. On the other hand the great age of Job, who lived 140 years after the death of his first ten, adult children (Job 42:16), places Job somewhere in the 200 years of age time frame. This would mean that Job probably lived in the days of Terah, the father of Abraham. This would also mean that Job’s recorded story is of more ancient origin. Indeed, even Hebraists speak of the book of Job as the most ancient of the Hebrew dialect and much harder to translate.

Since the book of Job was most probably first recorded hundreds of years before Moses, we will start there. Sheol is mentioned eight times in the book of Job. In addition, other important information and descriptive terminology is given in accordance with it.

After reading these eight occurrences you will begin to note that Sheol is always used in the *singular*. In other words there is only one common Sheol, not many. In fact,

throughout all the Hebrew Scriptures, Sheol is never used in the plural. This leads us to the conclusion that though there are many graves (*quebers*), there is only one Sheol. Consequently, Sheol is not “a grave.”

1. The Setting for Job

In the book of Job, reference is made to the flood which took place a few hundred years earlier. Job spoke of “waters” that were sent out by God “to overwhelm the earth” (Job 12:15), and Eliphaz spoke more specifically of the “**wicked men**” who were “swept away” by the flood—“Will you keep to the old way which *wicked men* have trod, who were *cut down* before their time, whose foundations were swept away by a flood?” (Job. 22:15-17). No doubt this was common knowledge to all in Job’s day, because a look at the Biblically revealed chronology will show that Noah and Shem were still living at the time of Job (see Genesis 9:22 and 11:10-32).

Why do I bring this up? Simply because the identity of these “wicked men,” and what happened to them after their physical drowning, was especially common knowledge not only to Job’s generation, but also to the later Hebrew generations who wrote further commentary about them. This will also have vital connections to the very setting for the whole account recorded in the book of Job.

In the Mosaic account of the flood, which was also probably handed down by way of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth, we are told about these “wicked men” in these words—

“...the *sons of God* saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose... The *Nephilim* (giants) were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the *sons of God* came in to the daughters of men, and they bore (children) to them. Those were the **mighty men** who were of old, **men of renown**... And the Lord saw that the **wickedness of man** was great on the earth...” (Genesis 6:2-5).

First of all, no doubt Job knew precisely who “*the sons of God*” were, because they form *the very introduction to his book*. They were the angelic beings, some of whom were wicked and in compliance with Satan (Adversary), the very adversary who brought Job’s pains and heartaches upon him (see Job 1:6 and 2:1). Among the “sons of God” was none other than Satan according to the book of Job. The “wicked men” were the outstanding “men of renown” and “giants” in the earth, who were the offspring of the cohabitation between some of these fallen angels and the beautiful daughters of men.

According to the Apostle Peter and Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, these fallen angelic beings had been plunged into a special abode called *Tartarus* (or Pit of darkness) to await their final judgment. But not only that, the “*spirits*” of wicked people who rejected the ministry of Noah were likewise gathered into a holding “**prison**” to await their judgment as well. Let us read it—

“The *angels* who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He (God) has kept in *eternal bonds under darkness* for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6).

“For if God did not spare *angels* when they sinned, but cast them into *Hell (Tartarus)* and committed them to *pits of darkness*, reserved for judgment...” (II Pet. 2:4).

“...the *spirits* (including the wicked men) now in *prison*, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah...” (I Pet. 3:19,20).

It becomes evident from these inspired commentaries that certain of the fallen angelic beings called “*the sons of God*” were, since the flood, confined by bonds in the part of Hell called in the Greek, *Tartarus*. In addition, the “*spirits*” of the wicked men were likewise “*imprisoned*” (from the time of that flood until the very moment Peter was writing), in what would be *Hades* in the Greek or *Sheol* in the Hebrew. That means in Job’s day *Sheol* was a place of the residence of the “*spirits*” of the disembodied wicked. As we shall see, Job was most certainly not ignorant of this reality.

2. *Job’s Understanding of the Nature of Man*

Some people seem to think that the early generations of man were Neanderthalic in their understanding of what we have come to call in our modern times the doctrine of Anthropology, i.e., “the nature of man.” Such was not the case.

Job was fully cognizant of spirit intelligences in God’s creation. After all, God, Himself, is a spirit being—the supreme Spirit intelligence and creator of all things. In fact God speaks directly to man in the book of Job. The book of Job, as we saw above, talks about the angelic “sons of God” who were *spirit* creatures. There were other “spirit” intelligences indicated in the book of Job. Eliphaz had placed his whole contention with Job upon a message from such a being—“Now a word was secretly brought to me...from visions of the night...Then a *spirit* passed before my face...a form was before my eyes...Then I heard a voice saying...” (Job 4:12-17).

Not only did Job know of such spirit intelligences but he was likewise cognizant that man, himself, was a dichotomy. That is, man possessed a spiritual nature which was separate and distinct from his body of mere physical animation or breath. For instance in the book of Job, Elihu speaks—“The *spirit* within me compels me” (Job 32:18). Indeed, in the very same chapter we are told—“But there is a *spirit in man*, and the breath (or inspiration) of the Almighty gives him understanding” (Job 32:8).

This is a fundamental truth that never loses its power throughout the ages. It is added upon, but never diminished. The Apostle Paul spoke the very same truth when he said—“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man *except the spirit* of man *which is in him*? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the *Spirit* of God” (I Cor. 2:10-11).

According to these passages in Job and in I Corinthians, the spirit in man is that faculty within him which can receive communication from the greater Spirit being—God. It is stated earlier in Job—“Look! In His servants He has no faith, and His messengers (angels) He charges with folly. How much more so with *those dwelling in houses of clay*” (Job 4:18,19). This is, no doubt, the original statement in the Bible describing man’s

physical body as a mere “*house*” in which the real man dwells—see also Christ’s words in Luke 11:24-26 & 37-40; II Cor. 5:1-9; II Pet. 1:13,14, etc. In addition, Job stated these discriminating words about man—“Only his flesh *while upon him* will keep aching, and his *soul within him* will keep mourning” (Job 14:22, literal rendering).

All this is in perfect accord with Solomon who spoke of man at death—“Then shall the *dust* return to the earth as it was; and *the spirit* shall return to God Who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Zechariah concurs in the dichotomy of man with the words—“..the utterance of Jehovah, the One Who is stretching out the heavens and laying the foundation of the earth and forming the *spirit of man* inside him” (Zech. 12:1). Christ said to the religious rulers of His day—“You fools (or unreasonable people), did not He that made the *outside* (part of man) also (make) *the inside*?” (Luke 11:37-40). Christ also said—“Do not fear those who kill the *body* but cannot kill the *soul*. But rather fear Him Who is able to destroy *both soul and body* in Hell” (Matt. 10:28, see chap. 9). In this context we must understand the *soul* to be that spiritual nature existing within man. In addition, it is consistently revealed in other places as well that man can and does exist apart from his body. As examples—II Cor. 12:2-5; II Cor. 5:1-9; Philip 1:21-24; II Pet. 1:13,14, etc.

Therefore “death” to Job would be no different than it was to James some 2000 years later, who said—“For as the body without the *spirit* is dead...” (James 2:26). Death was merely the *separation* of the spirit of man from his house of clay. Likewise we shall see that it is in Job the unique word *raphah* (disembodied spirit) is first used and directly related to the occupants of Sheol.

3. Truly, God Opens the Doors on Death

The LORD asked Job the questions of maximum curiosity and impossibility for man to answer in order to demonstrate man’s utter reliance upon God for revelation. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth...when the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:4,7). Of course Job, nor any other human being, was nowhere around. Then God asked, “*Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?*” (Job 38:17). Of equal impossibility was man’s ability to look into the world of death. Most certainly there was no secret about what happens to men physically when they die—their bodies are buried in tombs or graves and return to the dust. This was never a secret and needs no special revelation.

However, the question God asked Job is what this whole study is all about. Here in Job 38:17 God spoke of death from another perspective. It is as if death was a vast secret chamber and man must pass through the “*gates*” or “*doors*” to enter into this chamber. Earlier Job himself had identified the “gates of death” as being “*the gates of Sheol*” and stated in his frustration—“Where then is my hope? As for my hope who can see it? *Will it go down with me to the gates of Sheol?* Or shall we have rest together in the dust?”— Job 17:15,16. To die and return to the dust is one thing, but going through the “gates of Sheol” is an altogether different event. The one has to do with man’s body; the other pertains to man’s spiritual nature and, as we shall see, his continued conscious existence. Isaiah the prophet used the same terminology when he said—“In the prime of my life I shall go to the *gates of Sheol*...” (Isa. 38:10). Solomon, with unique wisdom and divine inspiration, likewise spoke concerning the path of immortality as being—“..the

way to *Sheol*, descending to the ***chambers of death***” (Prov. 7:27). So now we have learned from these several Scriptures that Sheol has “***gates***” and those gates open into “***chambers***.” Of course, we all know that “chambers” are made for *occupants*.

Earlier in this very passage Job had said—“If I wait for *Sheol* as my ***house***, if I make my bed in darkness...”—Job 17:13. In this context Job talked about the two aspects of death. On the one hand is physical corruption of the body into the dust. On the other hand is this residence which has “***gates***” or “***doors***” that lead into a “***house***.” The word “***house***” and Solomon’s word “***chambers***,” of course, represent an entirely different kind of dwelling place than the “dust.”

4. Job Foresees Ultimate Liberation

Yes, Sheol is designed for occupants. Job, himself, on one occasion asked to be a resident there. In the midst of Job’s anguish he asked God with these words—“***Oh, that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!***”—Job. 14:13.

I think this is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. On the one hand, Job asked to be “***hidden in Sheol***,” which in itself would make Sheol for him a place of residence outside the sight of man and the pains of this life. However, in addition, he also asked for God to “***remember***” him there and “***appoint***” him a “***set time***,” implying a time of release! Amazing, is it not? Here we are at the very beginning of our study on Hell, and the very first book in the Bible to describe it actually takes us all the way across the ages to the highlight of the revelation placed upon it by Christ’s work of redemption. For the New Testament reveals that the “***set time***” of the liberation of the saints from Sheol was at the glorious resurrection and ascension of Christ, when He ascended from “***the lower parts of the earth***” (Sheol) and “***led captivity captive***” (Eph. 4:8-10). That is, Christ emptied Sheol of all the righteous occupants. This is when Job got his “***set time***” and was “***remembered***.”

In a similar way, no one doubts that Job saw the time of his eventual physical resurrection as well, for he said—

“Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!
That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever!
For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He shall stand on the earth!
And even after my skin is destroyed, yet I know that in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me” (Job 19:23-27).

5. God Alone Knows All About Sheol

We have seen that God’s revelation alone will open to us the secrets concerning Sheol, the world beneath. Job stated emphatically—“***Sheol*** is naked before Him (God), and ***Destruction*** has no covering”—Job. 26:6. In other words God sees all, even the world that is outside the sight of man. Solomon, in all his God-given wisdom made a similar statement—“***Sheol*** and ***Destruction*** are before Jehovah; how much more the hearts of the children of men” (Prov. 15:11). This is an interesting statement, as I have previously discussed in my introduction.

One of the amazing things that the four Gospels record for us are the occasions when our Lord Jesus Christ knew and read what was going on in the hearts of men, even though those men were often disguising their inward thinking by their outward flattery. On one such occasion, recorded for us in the Gospel of Luke (7:36-50), the Pharisee Simon had invited Christ to a feast and no doubt made Christ the honored guest. Actually this was an example of polite, dignified hypocrisy. An uninvited person came in, a notorious woman of disrepute. No doubt, she was an embarrassment because she placed herself at Jesus' feet weeping and washing His feet with her very tears of shame. What an embarrassing situation! And there sat Simon, thinking inwardly, with a secret attitude of contempt, "If this man (Christ) were a prophet he would know who this woman is." In other words, Simon was thinking that anyone who knew about this woman would never let her even touch him. But the facts were, Christ not only knew who the woman was, but He also knew what Simon was actually thinking. In other words, Christ was more than a prophet—He was Jehovah Who knew "the hearts of the children of men."

Truly, the world of Sheol, which is out of sight to men, is not out of sight to God. And furthermore, it is God's good intent to reveal to His people many of the important details about Sheol which we would never otherwise know.

6. Additional Revelations in Job Concerning Sheol

I said that Sheol was mentioned eight times in the book of Job. So far we have read four of those occasions—Job 14:13; 17:13; 17:15,16 and 26:6.

Permanence The first time Sheol is mentioned in the book of Job it is stated simply "He that goes *down* to Sheol does not *come up*. He shall never return to his *house*, nor shall his place know him any more"—Job 7:9. This is a simple principle that once a person goes into Sheol he does not return into this life. No one leaves this place of confinement. Sheol is generally a permanent place. Of course, there is the exception of Job's own ultimate hope of the "*set time*" of his "*remembrance*" (Job 14:13), which implies his (and the rest of the righteous) eventual release from Sheol.

Dwelling These Scriptures reveal an interesting fact that Job actually had two different "*houses*" that he could occupy. As stated in this verse (7:9), the first house was on earth to which he could never return once he had gone to Sheol. However, in chapter 17, Sheol itself was also spoken of as his "*House*" (verse 13). Houses are, of course, *dwelling places*, and that is precisely the meaning which the Spirit of God wants to convey to the understanding of the reader of the Scriptures—Sheol is a dwelling place for existing, conscious spirits.

Down Another question that emerges from this passage is the question—just exactly where is this "house," in particular, the house of Sheol? The "house" on earth is a given. We naturally know it is on the surface of the earth. But Sheol is herein and always said to be "DOWN." But let not the reader assume this simply means "six feet under," because it most certainly does not. Nor does it mean a real deep pit, even a deep cavern, because that is not the meaning, either. "*Down*" as used here, and as we shall see, is the ultimate depth, the very *opposite* of Heaven. Other Scriptures will say it is in the bowels (lower parts) of the earth.

The second time Sheol is mentioned in Job, it is placed only within “the limits of God”—“Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are *higher* than Heaven—what can you do? *Deeper* than Sheol—what can you know?”—Job 11:8. In other words, Sheol is obviously beyond man’s capability to literally dig. That takes it totally out of any equation with a physical grave of some kind on the earth. Nor is the book of Job the last to make this comparison. The Psalmist made a similar statement—“*If I ascend up into heaven, Thou (God) art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold Thou (the omnipresent God) art there*” (Psalm 139:8). Sheol is the opposite of Heaven. Heaven is beyond our starry heavens. Sheol is in the opposite direction. It is within the depths and bowels of the earth. Amos 9:2 says—“*Though they dig into Sheol (which they could never do), thence will I take them; though they climb up to heaven (which they could never do), thence will I bring them down.*” No one can escape from God.

Wicked The last two references in Job indicate that the wicked are most certainly going to Sheol. Job 21:13—“*And in a moment they (the wicked) go down to Sheol.*” Job 24:19—“*Drought and heat consume snow waters: (so) Sheol (those) who sinned.*” So we know for sure Sheol is for the wicked and it will be a time of being “*consumed.*” Being “*consumed*” in Sheol, as we shall see, does not mean the wicked cease to be. Verse 30 of Job 21 expressly says, “*For the wicked are RESERVED for the day of doom. They shall be brought out on the day of wrath.*” This will be their ultimate judgment.

7. “*Sheol*” and “*Abaddon*”

Before we leave the book of Job, let us look once again at Job 26:5 & 6—“*The dead tremble, those under the waters and those inhabiting them. **Sheol** is naked before Him (God), and **Destruction** (Abaddon) has no covering.*”

The first thing we want to examine is the question of just exactly WHO or WHAT goes to Sheol? As we stated earlier, Job most certainly believed in the dichotomy of man. Man possesses an inner spiritual nature. Job believed he could go to Sheol. Later commentary by the Apostle Peter says that the “*spirits*” of the wicked before the flood were in this “prison” (I Pet. 3:19,20). Now, in this last passage about Sheol in the book of Job, it is clearly demonstrated that it is the inward spiritual nature of man that occupies Sheol. The word used here, often translated as the “*dead*,” is really a unique word and is used only eight times in the Hebrew Scriptures—and it does not have reference to a dead, lifeless **body**. The Hebrew Lexicons say this word is *raphah*; it specifically means “ghosts, shades, or disembodied spirits residing in Sheol” (see *Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon, Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, NASV Hebrew Dictionary*, or Strong #7496). They explain that the word is taken from the Hebrew *rash*, which carries the idea of something “feeble, weak, flaccid, or to tremble.” Furthermore, out of the eight occurrences where this word is used, four of the times it is specifically associated in context with Sheol—Job 26:5,6; Psalm 88:10 (see context of verses 3, 4 & 6); Prov. 9:18 and Isa. 14:9. In addition, in Prov. 21:16, it is designated as the “*assembly of the dead (raphah)*,” or literally, “*the assembly of the spirits (of the dead).*” The other three references are Prov. 2:18 and Isa. 26:14 & 19. Thus it is clearly proven that it is the inward spiritual nature of man which is destined to occupy this subterranean Sheol.

The second important truth about this passage in Job is the introduction of a new word—*Destruction* or literally, “**Abaddon**.” It appears to be used as a synonym or complementary word to “Sheol.” Indeed, *Abaddon* is used in equal force in the following three passages: Job 28:22—“*Abaddon* and *Death* say (they heard a report about) ‘wisdom’;” Job 31:12—“...(a judgment) *fire* that consumes to *Abaddon*;” and Psalm 88:11—“Will Thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or Thy faithfulness in *Abaddon*?” As in Job 26:6 above, so again, in Proverbs 15:11 and 27:20, *Abaddon* is directly linked with Sheol; “*Sheol* and *Abaddon* are open before Jehovah” and “*Sheol* and *Abaddon* are never satisfied.” Finally, in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, “**Abaddon**” is clearly identified with “*The Bottomless Pit*,” the realm of demonic spirits—Rev. 9:1-12. In addition, the word is now also personified, Rev. 9:11—“They have a king over them (the demons), the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is ‘**Abaddon**,’ and in the Greek he has a name, ‘*Apollyon*’ (destruction).” Both the Hebrew and the Greek carry the meaning as “Destruction,” and are generally understood as a synonym or further complement for Sheol or Hades. Since Sheol is referred to as “*The chambers of death*” it would appear that there is that part of Sheol which would make it a place of **destruction** and suffering. Later Scriptures will add confirmation to this as it pertains to the wicked.

This is obvious confirmation that Sheol is the place of the departed spirits of the dead. This is also the place of the general “destruction” (*Abaddon*), by means of a “fire” (Job 31:12) on the disembodied spirits of the lost or unrighteous. There is likewise a section of Sheol for the demonic spirits referred to as “*the bottomless pit*.” As there is the section of Sheol for the unrighteous and for demonic spirits, so also at this time there is that understood section of Sheol for the righteous, like Job. In fact, Jesus Christ, Himself, will enlarge upon and explain this more thoroughly in Luke 16:19-30.

There is another passage in Job, though it does not specify Sheol, yet most believe it has reference to the place of Sheol; that is Job 10:21 & 22. “*Before I go to the place from which I shall not return, to the land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land as dark as darkness itself, as the shadow of death, without any order, where even the light is like darkness.*” This seems to be a general designation befitting this subterranean chamber.

IN SUMMARY FROM JOB

Since we have spent so much time in the book of Job it may be appropriate to make a summary. Most all that we have discovered are basics and will simply be added to as we traverse through the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

- 1.) Job was aware of the “Sons of God” who were angelic spirit creatures, some of whom were wicked and antagonistic to God and God’s purposes. The truth in Job is consistent with the revelation by the Apostle Peter that both the “sons of God” who polluted the earth along with the “wicked men” who were destroyed by the flood are confined in Sheol.
- 2.) In Job, the dichotomy of man is understood. Man has both a physical body and a spirit residence in that body. At physical death the spirit departs from the body.

- 3.) In Job, Sheol is for the “*disembodied spirits*” (*raphah*) of mankind.
- 4.) In Job, Sheol is spoken of as “*a land of darkness,*” having “*gates*” or “*doors,*” and is as a “*house*” or dwelling place, to which people enter after death.
- 5.) In Job, Sheol is “*down*” within the earth in the maximum sense of being the ultimate place as the very *opposite of Heaven*.
- 6.) In Job is the beautiful revelation that Job hoped for an “*appointed*” “*set time*” when he would be “*remembered*” in Sheol, so as to be liberated.
- 7.) In Job, Sheol is a place of *permanent confinement* till a day of judgment for the unrighteous.
- 8.) In Job, Sheol is *especially* the destination for the *wicked*.
- 9.) In Job, Sheol is for the continuous “*consumption*” and/or “*destruction*” of the wicked, as in a “*fire.*” Yet the wicked are “*reserved*” for the day of judgment.
- 10.) This last point is very important! In Job we are introduced to the word “*Abaddon*” as a complementary word to *Sheol* and/or of a compartment in Sheol. The truth regarding *Abaddon* will be summed up in the very last book of the Bible. Herein we have a remarkable fact presented before us. *Abaddon* is presented in the very first or oldest book of the Hebrew Cannon and it is also taken up in the very last book of the Greek Cannon of Scripture. From the time Job was written to the time Revelation was written spans nearly 2000 years. In addition, the context for mentioning *Abaddon* in the book of Revelation is the second coming of Jesus Christ—that spans another 2000 years. Then, Revelation would indicate that it will continue to exist for another 1000 years after the second coming. Thus *Abaddon* has existed and will exist for at least 5000 years. This does not take into consideration how long before Job *Abaddon* was in existence. Now, as we saw, *Abaddon* means “**DESTRUCTION**”! That means that “**Destruction**” will exist for a minimum of 5000 years. Furthermore, the occupants of “**Destruction,**” both angelic spirits and human spirits, still exist as spirit beings throughout the whole time. They never change. Consequently “**Destruction**” for the wicked and for the fallen angelic beings could never possibly mean “**Annihilation**” or “**cessation of being.**” We must understand that “**destruction**” as it pertains to the lost suffering in Sheol means a “**Condition of Existence**” and not the “*Termination of Existence.*”

As one should be able to see from the information we have gathered from the book of Job, a whole new world has been opened to us on the subject of Sheol. It becomes absolutely clear that Sheol is a subterranean gathering place for the disembodied spirits of the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous. For the wicked it appears to be a fearful place of continuous destruction in fire, and yet there is that reservation for the day of judgment. For the righteous there does not appear to be any suffering, but only an awaiting for a future release.

Chapter Three—SHEOL OF THE TORAH **(The Five Books of Moses)**

GENESIS

“Gathered to His people”

The first expression that draws our interest in the book of Genesis is not the word Sheol; nevertheless, it must be, and is, *directly related*. The expression “*gathered to his people*” is noteworthy in the book of Genesis when one of the fathers had died.

For instance, at Abraham’s death he was said to be “*gathered to his people*” (Gen. 25:8). The first thing we think of by the words “*his people*” are either his own physical relatives who have died before him, or else those of like precious faith with him who had gone before in death. If this is merely a figure of speech, not to be taken literally, then it simply means he died like all the rest of mankind and thereby joined the whole human race in the dust. That idea does not find much resonance in anyone’s thinking. Other than Lot, all Abraham’s relatives or ancestors were living in Mesopotamia. So he certainly was not “*gathered*” to them physically because Abraham was very plainly buried right there in the land of promise. His body was not taken all the way back to the land of Mesopotamia to be interred with his physical relatives. However, as was stated in the book of Job, it must have the same meaning as to pass through the gates of Sheol to a permanent resting place.

There are obviously two aspects to death. Abraham was to be “buried in a good (old) age” (Gen. 15:15); that takes care of his body. Yet in the very same passage it was first promised—“*he shall go to his fathers.*” Since they buried Abraham’s body right there in Canaan, how then must “he go to his fathers,” or be “gathered to his people”? The action of being “*gathered to his people*” speaks of the person who has died as actually being collected together with a group of people who are in some way related to him. The only revealed fact that would fit in clarity was the reality that the spirits of the righteous were *gathered in Sheol*. Indeed, this is precisely the answer the Lord Jesus Christ gave to us in the Gospel account of Luke 16:22 & 23. There Christ specifically said Abraham was in *Hades* which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Sheol*. So, for Abraham to be “gathered to his people” meant his soul went to Sheol and was joined with all the souls of the righteous before him.

Also, at the moment when Jacob died down in Egypt he was said to be “*gathered to his people*” (Gen. 49:33). Yet it was months before Jacob was actually physically buried up in Canaan with his fathers (Gen. 49:29 & 30). Therefore he certainly was not immediately buried with them. So this is not talking about the action upon his bodily remains. See also Gen. 25:17; 35:29 & 49:29 where this expression is used.

In Deut. 32:50 the expression is used again in reference to Moses. Remember, Moses’ body was privately and secretly buried—Deut. 34:6. So Moses was not gathered to anyone physically. Yet Moses was collected together with “his people,” i.e., the souls of the righteous dead.

These expressions, therefore, must have reference to the souls of these men, which at the actual time of their separation from their bodies went into Sheol, the subterranean (always “down”) gathering place for them. This will be further confirmed as we look at the following passages—

“*Sheol*”

Gen. 37:35 “I (Jacob) will go down to *Sheol* to my son mourning.”

Jacob had just heard the report that his son Joseph was torn to pieces and probably devoured by wild beasts. Consequently there would be no burial or grave for Joseph’s body. Yet Jacob says “*I will go down to...my son.*” That means that where Joseph is, in “*Sheol*,” Jacob will eventually go, himself. Obviously, this is not into some tomb or sepulcher. This fits perfectly the previous statements about those who died being “*gathered to their people.*” In this case, when Jacob was to eventually die, he would, in fact, be “*gathered...to Joseph in Sheol.*” Consequently, being gathered to one’s people at death has reference to their gathering down in Sheol.

Gen. 42:38 “...then you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.”

Gen. 44:29 “...and you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.”

Gen. 44:31 “...will bring down the gray hair of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol.”

In each of these cases it should be understood that the “sorrow” in Jacob’s soul was probably because most of God’s promises to him and his sons were centered around their inheritance of the land of Canaan and their consequent prosperity there. Jacob was hoping to realize those promises in his lifetime with his sons. The thought of their demise brought sorrow to his soul. Now in his old age (“gray hairs”) the thought of another son lost would compound his “sorrow.”

“*Fire*”

The first time Genesis speaks of *fire* is in chapter 19 with the destruction of those two notorious cities, Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24). The fiery judgment was an expression of God’s utter wrath against the depravity of those communities. There still remains what some say is the largest potash industry in the world at the lower end of the Dead Sea area. Actually, throughout the Bible, fire remains as the emblematic judgment of God against sin and wickedness. We saw in the book of Job the expression of God’s wrath as “fire that descends even into Sheol.” The prophets speak of more fiery judgments to come upon the world. They are so designated numerous times.

The second time *fire* is mentioned in the book of Genesis was in the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen.22). Most people know quite well the test that God gave to Abraham to offer up his own beloved son as a sacrifice. However, the realization that Abraham was to offer him as a *burnt* sacrifice is not always remembered. The words of Isaac to his father are really quite shocking—“Behold, here is *THE FIRE*, but where is the lamb?” (Gen. 22:7). The answer of Abraham is an amazing answer. As his answer pertained to the lamb, Abraham said, “God would provide for Himself *the Lamb* for a *burnt* offering.” We all know now that this answer actually looks down through the corridors of time to “*the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.*” However, the question we can

ask in light of the subject before us is—“Why would God want Abraham to *BURN UP* his son?” Would not the simple sacrifice of physical death be enough? Why does God demand that the body, either of the lamb or of Abraham’s own son, be burned up with a consuming fire? Was it not a picture of Christ’s suffering as the antitypical Lamb?

As in the first case of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, there is no secret about the purpose of fire as it is used in the animal sacrificial system. It is used as an expression of wrath and judgment and purging against sin.

LEVITICUS—The Burnt Sacrifices

As we saw above, Isaac was to be offered as a “burnt sacrifice.” In the book of Leviticus we are given the details about the “*Law of the Burnt Sacrifices*” (Lev. 1 & 6:8-13). Obviously the most important thing about the “burnt sacrifices” was the fact that *after* the animal was slain, it was to be placed upon an altar to be *wholly consumed by fire*. The redemption of any individual was not completed at the time the animal was slain. On the contrary, in order for the atonement to be made, the animal must be totally consumed by fire. Thus, the major act in this sacrificial system was the *burning* of the sacrifice to depict the actual total judgment of God against sin.

The overwhelming number of times fire is mentioned in the Scriptures is specifically concerned with judgment upon ungodly idols, people, or cities, or nations, or even the earth itself. The words commonly associated with fire are “*punishment, torment, fury, vengeance, anger, consuming, wrath, jealousy, purification from sin, etc., etc.*” Fire is thus depicted throughout the Scriptures as the judgment of God against sin. This is basic and fundamental. Everyone who reads the Scriptures admits to this reality.

All admit these sacrifices spoke of the redemption the sinner has through the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though the death of Christ on the cross often is used to epitomize our redemption, yet by no stretch of the imagination did Christ’s physical death on the cross complete the basis for our atonement. Christ’s death was a three day and three night death, wherein he descended into the lower region of the earth called Sheol/Hades—Matt. 12:40; Jonah 2:2; Acts 2:31; Psalm 16:10; Eph. 4:9,10 and Rom. 10:6,7. In this three day death Christ was bearing our sins under the judgment hand of God. That meant *bearing our sins under the curse of God* in the fiery Hell. Because the fire of the burnt sacrifices has its obvious **complement** in the judgmental fire of Hell where Christ went, theologians, using their natural, soulish minds, have been thrown into controversy ever since. Please see my study *The Sufferings Of Jesus Christ Even To The Lowest Hell*.

As positive proof that the burning of the sacrifice depicts the sufferings of Hell, let us look at the most important sacrifice in the Mosaic revelation.

Leviticus—“And The Goat Shall Bear Upon Him All Their Iniquities Into A Land Of Separation” (Lev. 16:22, literal).

When one explores the sacrificial system given to the nation of Israel through the prophet Moses, it is like walking into a great memorial museum and passing before

numerous paintings displaying the struggles and passions of the nation as manifested in their sacrificial system of blood, death and fire. Yet, the result brought forgiveness, life and redemption with victories and hopes for the future. As we walk along we finally come to stand before the last grand work which is a massive panoramic named “*The Great Day Of Atonement*” (Lev. 23:26 & 27). You gaze upon it as if mesmerized in an attempt to fully comprehend the details of its meaning.

Here in the book of Leviticus we do, in fact, enter into the sacred halls of divine revelation. These halls (chapters) portray before us the many sacrifices that speak of the story of sinful human beings, on a sin-cursed earth, being reconciled to the Creator of heaven and earth on the basis of the sacrifices. Finally in chapter 16, we stand before the most important sacrifice of Israel’s sacred year calendar. Here is the sacrifice of all sacrifices. There is none other like it and there is none other of equal importance. *Amazingly, here is a sacrifice that is actually not sacrificed!* Here is a living animal that does not die and is not burned up! Yet this live animal represents the burning that would normally take place in all the burnt sacrifices.

Note carefully—here portrayed before us will be the sacrificial *afterlife existence* of a substitute bearing away the sins of mankind into the horrible wilderness of the dead. Here it has been said by the Jewish sages, “*all life is in a state of death and only death is alive.*” What the Jewish sages of old were talking about was simply conscious existence after death. Here is where the total story of the price paid for our redemption is spelled out in unusual detail. Let us explore those details as it pertains to the subject before us.

1. Explanation

On the tenth day of the seventh month of Israel’s sacred year calendar, a very special High Sabbath was held. It is literally called “The Sabbath of Sabbatism” (Lev. 16:31). More commonly, this day was known as the great “Day of Atonement” (*Yom-kipper*) or simply “The Day” (*Yoma*); see Lev.23:26. This day represented the culmination of the Levitical sacrificial system. It is also referred to as the “climax” of all purificatory sacrifices and ordinances. On this day the sins of the nation of Israel will be “atoned,” in a ritual or ceremonial manner, for another year. The importance of this day is also demonstrated in that once every fifty years this day was selected as the day upon which the great “*Jubilee*” release would be announced (see Lev. 25:9).

This would be the one and only time of the year that the High Priest had access to “the Holiest of All” section of the Tabernacle, or later, the Temple (Lev. 16:2). This was virtually going into the very presence of God as represented by the Shekinah glory over the Mercy Seat. As a consequence of this sacrifice the sins of the nation of Israel would be put away, covered and/or atoned for. In turn this particular day would bring to an end the special sacrificial calendar of Judaism which would not open again until the spring sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

This day clearly represents the most mysterious and yet significant of all Israel’s sacrificial services. In particular, this sacrifice will explain, by an outward visual demonstration, the deep hidden spiritual realities of how God has put away, for all eternity, all our sins by the antitypical “Scapegoat,” the Lord Jesus Christ. The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews would say, “But now, once at the *climax* of the ages, He

(Christ) has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (literal translation, Heb. 9:26). Most certainly at this particular sacrifice, strange and unusual things took place. Only by this putting away of sins could AT-ONE-MENT with God ever be achieved. Here we will see Christ die and shed His precious blood, and yet beyond His immediate death, we will see Christ bearing the horrible guilt and penalty of sins upon His soul into a wilderness of despair and abandonment where the only inhabitants are the spirits of the wicked dead and the demons of Hell.

2. Procedure—The Two Goats

Because of the importance of this day no ordinary priest could officiate—only the High Priest. In addition, the High Priest was instructed to bathe his flesh in water prior to putting on the special priestly garment for the occasion (Lev. 16:3,4). Outside the sanctuary and throughout the whole land of Israel, the people would be “afflicting their souls” all day long. Anyone who would not thus “humble himself” (16:29 & 31) was under threat of being “*cut off and destroyed*” from the nation (23:29). Some of the major passages are—Lev. 16:1-54; 23:26-32; Exo. 30:10; Num. 29:7-11 & Hebrews 9:6-12 & 24-28.

Though there are different sacrificial offerings made on this day pertaining to the different people involved in the ritual, yet the focus of attention will concern the offering of two goats representing the nation. All commentators, be they Jewish or Christian, agree that these two goats represent ONE singular sacrificial offering. Each goat will represent a different aspect of the special offering that brings the ceremonial remission of the nation’s sins. The congregation will present these two goats which, according to tradition, looked very much alike. They would be the same size and color to look almost like twins. The two goats would be taken by the High Priest (Lev. 16:3,5 & 6) and would be presented “before the Lord” (Lev. 16:7) at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

One may remember earlier in the book of Leviticus the ritual service regarding the cleansing of the leper, where two birds are selected for that sacrifice (Lev. 14:1-9). Only one bird is slain, and the second bird is then dipped into the blood of the first bird and set free to fly away. In a very simple and beautiful way, this is the picture of both the death of Christ for cleansing and then the resurrection of Christ as the basis for giving new life as well. As we shall see in the case of these two goats in Lev. 16, one will die and the other will be taken away, but by no stretch of the imagination to a blissful freedom. Therefore, in this case of the two goats, the departure of the second does not depict resurrection, but the actual existence in the destruction of Sheol.

3. Procedure—the Two Lots

When these two goats are presented before the Lord, an interesting procedure takes place. “Lots are cast” on behalf of these two goats (Lev. 16:8-10). The casting of lots was a custom in the times of Israel to determine or make selection for whatever purpose was involved. “Lots” were simply objects such as, in this case, two stones or two pieces of material upon which an inscription was made on each object to represent the two parties for the selection. These lots were either placed in a container and thrown out, or somehow cast forth by the High Priest, who could not see the inscription or the objects. This was the means by which the two goats were differentiated and selected,

each for its particular assignment in the sacrificial ritual. Though this is considered as ONE sacrifice, yet this selection is necessary in order to depict the two important stages which are to form the total picture of what is necessary for the disposal of the nation's sins.

Let us look at what is inscribed upon the two lots. The text says one lot is for "Jehovah." That would mean that the name in Hebrew called "the tetragram," "YHWH," was inscribed on one of the lots. The other lot was said to be for "Azazel" (literal, not *scapegoat* as used in later tradition). The Hebrew is AZ (goat) and AZEL (departure). The basic meaning is "goat of departure." However, most interpreters point out that "AZAZEL" stands in opposition to "YHWH" which would mean that it stands as a personification of another person. Furthermore, since this goat will depart into "a land not inhabited," or "the wilderness desolation" from which they make sure the goat will never return, AZAZEL came to represent a goat demon (Lev. 17:7) or an evil spirit or Satan himself. Further reason for this is the fact that throughout the Scriptures the wilderness itself represented all that is "great and terrible" (see as examples Deut. 1:19; 8:15 & Jer. 2:6). Evil things were said to inhabit the desolate wilderness, even demons (see Isa. 13:21; 34:14; Matt. 12:43; Lk. 8:27; 11:24 & Rev. 18:2). Consequently, the goat-head came to represent, or stand as a symbol of Satan. (Satanists' cults, even today, still use the emblem.) From one of the oldest books of the Pseudepigrapha (book of Enoch), Azazel was a half-goat and half-Satan. This ancient Jewish tradition was also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Peshar (ancient Jewish commentary), Azazel was the goat-headed Satan. Thus we can see that the tradition of associating this goat as being designated for Satan existed even long before the time of Christ. In the middle ages of the Christian era, up to and beyond the 15th century, Jewish commentaries continued to depict this goat as being offered or sent to Satan in the wilderness.

4. Procedure—The One Sacrifice

Remember that these two goats represent a singular sacrifice. Tradition says that with the casting of the lots, they tied a red cloth around the neck of the goat selected for YHWH. This goat alone was to be actually killed. Then they attached a red cloth to the horn of the goat selected to be sent into the wilderness for AZAZEL. They slaughtered the first goat which was designated for YHWH. Silently, part of his blood was taken into the Holiest of All by the High Priest and sprinkled before the Mercy Seat (Lev. 16:15-17). No one else was allowed in the Tabernacle or Temple while this was being done.

As to the sacrifice of the live goat (Lev. 16:20-22), the text says "*Aaron shall offer the live goat.*" However, the live goat, designated for AZAZEL, is not slaughtered. Since this is ONE sacrifice, this goat is considered as already dead by virtue of the death of the first goat. Therefore it remains alive in order to depict the remainder of the ritual. The High Priest would now approach the goat designated for AZAZEL and place "*both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat*" (Verse 21). Normally this procedure would have been done with an animal to be slaughtered. However, since these two goats represent ONE sacrifice, it is the second of the two goats that actually will bear the guilt of the sins of the nation upon itself. In that this second goat is *still alive*, it will depict the actual transportation of the

sins of the people into a place of condemnation and judgment. This goat, it is stated, “*will bear upon him all their iniquities to a solitary land (or land of separation)*” (verse 22). The divine application of this event is expressed in the inspired words of Isaiah—“*And the LORD has laid upon Him (Jesus Christ) the iniquity of us all*” (53:6).

The two goats also, therefore, represent the two aspects of the nature of man. The goat that was slaughtered represents the *body* being put to death. The live goat represents the *soul or spiritual* nature of man that remains in existence separate from the body.

5. Procedure—The Awful Trek

Many have painted the awful trek of Christ bearing His cross to Golgotha. And many have made depictions of the awful sufferings of Christ on the cross when He died. That would be like painting a picture of the goat that was actually slaughtered on this Day of Atonement. But no one (that I know of) has ever painted a picture of that awful trek of Christ after death, bearing the sins of the world into Hell. And in God’s reality, this is the most important part of the sacrifice, for herein are our sins actually disposed. In reality it was a three day trek into the wilderness of “Hades-Sheol,” a place originally made for Satan—AZAZEL (Matt. 25:41). The Scriptures make it very plain that Christ did not cease to exist the moment He died. At the point of physical death, Christ actually delivered His “spirit into the hands of God” (Luke 23:46) Who, in turn, sent Him (His soul) into “Hell” (*Hades*, Acts 2:27 & 31). Like the goat that is now sent out into the wilderness bearing upon itself the sins of the nation of Israel, so the antitypical scapegoat, the Lord Jesus Christ, is sent out bearing away into the “land of separation” the sins of the world. Make no mistake about it, though the thief on the cross was safe “with” Christ in the “paradise” (Luke 23:43 & 16:22) section of Hades, yet Christ, Himself, was bearing our sins in the flames of Hades. This scene is, of course, “out of sight” to the human eye, but herein vividly represented by the trek of the Scapegoat.

Now some men perceived and have painted pictures of this awful trek of the “scapegoat.” They are not intended to be beautiful paintings, but dismal scenes of despair and sorrow. In the Biblical account a “*strong man*” (vs. 21 & 22) is needed to lead this goat away into the wilderness bearing upon itself the indignity of being accursed. The obvious reason a strong man is needed is because this goat is going into a place to which it instinctively does not want to go; the goat hates it and resists it—yet becomes resigned to it. Truthfully, this trek must have been most solemn and sad. They pass away from any people or other animals, from any green fields or shrubs, and beyond any source of water, and out into the midst of a blazing heat, dry rocks and crevices. One could often see the goat vainly attempting to go back. The trek goes on through deeper canyons and desolations. The only life is the nervous lizards and soaring vultures, until finally the goat is surely disoriented and lost. Then quickly the strong man leaves the goat behind and makes his escape. In the later years of Israel’s history, the goat was taken out of Jerusalem into the awful Judean wilderness and sometimes even pushed over a cliff. There are even drawings in late Jewish commentaries of the goat falling into the clutches of an awaiting demon or devil called AZAZEL.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this wilderness was made not too many years ago by the modernist preacher, Bishop Pike, of the Episcopal Church. He thought he would try personally to find some evidences of the “Historical Jesus,” because he was not

at all satisfied with the Christ of the Bible. Amazing as it may seem, he came into this same Judean wilderness to try and find caves or places where evidences of his idea of what he thought Jesus should be could be found. He thought archaeologists might have overlooked certain evidences. He wandered through the desolations by himself and got lost. Many days later search parties eventually found his body in some canyon. He died a decidedly unpleasant death of thirst, with his tongue swollen to almost fill his mouth. How sad it was that he had rejected the antitypical “Scapegoat.”

6. Conclusion and Revelation

The trek of the goat selected for AZAZEL is a vivid picture of the desolations of “Sheol.” The first goat that was actually sacrificed represented the physical death of Jesus Christ. This is all that the world looking on could see. The second goat actually had all the sins placed upon it and bore this great burden into a hellish place of oblivion and *living death*. This is the portrayal from the Hebrew Scriptures of what happened to the spirit of Jesus Christ after His physical death and burial. Christ spent three days and nights in the “chambers of Sheol.” If you didn’t know what Sheol was before, certainly you do now! Thank God, the court of heaven was satisfied with the supernatural sufferings of Christ, God’s Divine Son. The guilt and penalty of the sins of the world were “taken away.” As John the Baptist said, “*Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.*” God has thus left for us a visual representation of what was done in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. “Hades” of the Greek Scriptures is the “Sheol” of the Hebrew Scriptures. In addition, in this typology we have preserved for us the reality AND CONDITION of Sheol as being the reception place to which the spirit and/or soul of our Sacrifice descended.

Why is it that most of the studies on the subject of Hell (Sheol), especially by those who reject it as a place of conscious torment, totally ignore this vivid picture that God has designed so long ago for our understanding?

NUMBERS and DEUTERONOMY

Num. 16:30 “But if Jehovah makes a new thing, and the ground opens its mouth, and swallow them up, with all that pertains to them, and they go down alive into *Sheol*...”

Num. 16:33 “So they, and all that pertained to them went down alive into *Sheol*: and the earth closed upon them...”

This was a phenomenal event, which was a “once in human history” occurrence. There was serious rebellion against the leadership of Moses. The rebellion was composed of the very leadership of the nation—“two hundred and fifty of the leaders of the congregation” under the heads of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. God’s revealed judgment upon them was going to be severe—“a new thing” would happen. As stated above, the earth would literally “open its mouth and swallow them up...and they go down *alive* into Sheol.” If this was merely the earth opening up and people falling into a pit or canyon, then we could say that it actually has happened quite often. And the only thing unusual about it on this occasion is that the earth gave way directly beneath them. But even that is not totally unusual because people have sometimes suddenly fallen into

unexpected sink holes throughout time. In fact, animals, carts and whole houses have suddenly fallen in. That is obviously not what happened on this occasion.

It is obvious that no one has ever gone down ALIVE into Sheol! Therefore Sheol is not simply a grave, sinkhole or canyon—it is understood to be in another category altogether.

Deut. 32:22 “For a *fire* is kindled in my anger, and burns to the *lowest Sheol*;
It shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire
the foundations of the mountains.”

This is the last book of the Law and it concludes with a prophetic “song” that would remain throughout Israel’s history as a sober reminder of the nation’s apostasy and subsequent judgment from God. God’s wrath is spoken of throughout this song, but in this particular verse it is epitomized as “*a fire*” that “*burns to the lowest Sheol.*” This should leave no doubt in anyone’s mind that there is “**fire**” in Sheol! The fire in Sheol is the epitome of God’s wrath. This would be the same “*fire*” as mentioned in Job 31:12, which “*consumes to destruction (Abaddon).*”

Chapter Four—SHEOL OF THE PROPHETS

Following the order in the Hebrew Bibles, we will next look at those books under the classification or section called “The Prophets.”

I Sam. 2:6 “Jehovah kills and makes alive; He brings down to *Sheol* and *brings up*.”

This is obviously an interesting statement and deserves our attention. Hannah gave this prayer of thanksgiving after God gave to her a son who was to become Samuel the prophet. God had thus taken away her reproach by her conceiving and giving birth to Samuel. This was likewise a prophetic prayer that spoke of the second coming of the Messiah (verse 10). Certainly the statement in verse 6 is prophetic as well.

The “Bringing Back” of Samuel

In I Sam. 28:1-24 we have an unusual account that further enhances and complements all that we have learned so far about Sheol. At the end of this account we will realize that the facts of the story are totally consistent with what the collective body of Scriptures has so far given to us. Thus the story gives confirmation to the teaching of conscious existence of the spirit of man after death within the lower regions of the earth.

I will also state at the outset, that there is no question about the fact that the activities of witchcraft had been outlawed and enforced by the death penalty—see Lev. 20:27 & Deut. 18:9-11. In addition, king Saul, himself, will be guilty for even resorting to a witch for help—see I Chron. 10:13. However, we cannot successfully discount what happens here merely because a witch is employed by Saul. In fact, if we but remember that the king of Moab, Balak, employed the false prophet Balaam, as recorded in Numbers 22, 23 & 24, to come and curse Israel and instead, God overruled and put one of the most spectacular series of prophecies in the mouth of Balaam. These prophecies became a great blessing on Israel instead of a curse. So it is here in the case of the witch of Endor. She is the one to be totally surprised, because God overruled and did bring up Samuel, and not only that, Samuel gave nothing but the absolute truth. Therefore we must accept this event at its face value.

After the death of the prophet Samuel, the weak and disobedient king Saul came to dire straights in Israel’s war with the Philistines. Every attempt by king Saul to receive communications from God for directions failed. He called upon God but there was no answer. He asked for communication through the priesthood, but there was still no answer. In addition there was no prophet available. In desperation Saul told his servants to search for a medium (or witch) even though they had been outlawed by his own decree. They found a medium of Endor who was known to them to be able to communicate with the dead. Saul disguised himself and promised the woman protection if she would but call up Samuel. *This demonstrates on the face of it that Saul, and all others for that matter, recognized the continued existence of the spirits of the dead.* However, God did not want Israel to trust in mediums, who were devilish or demonic and often added fakery to their magic spells to deceive the people.

In this case the medium apparently went through her routine and to her own total surprise and shock, Samuel came up. In other words, God overruled in this situation and allowed a saint to arise out of Sheol. As we noted just earlier, Samuel's mother, Hannah, had stated that God could "bring up" as he wished. And now, indeed, God brings up Samuel himself, for whom Hannah was so thankful.

No doubt, mediums sometimes faked and mimicked their communication with the dead. But in this case, the text tells us, the medium herself was totally surprised because Samuel actually came up. I do not believe for one second God would allow a saint to so respond to a medium's enchantments unless it was within His perfect will. With Samuel's actual emergence from the realm of the world beneath, the witch realized that she had been deceived and the real identity of the one who made this request of her was none other than king Saul himself. The witch looked at king Saul in bewilderment, and Saul encouraged her to continue.

The medium actually saw Samuel come up, "*an old man,*" and "*wrapped in a robe.*" Samuel spoke to king Saul and said, "*Why have you disturbed (or disquieted) me?*" This meant that Samuel was in a condition of rest and comfort in contrast to the lost in Sheol who are in a condition of suffering. Saul rehearsed the situation and Samuel responded accordingly, "*Why do you ask me, since Jehovah has departed from you and has become your adversary?*" Samuel delivered another rebuke and told Saul of his own soon death—"*Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.*" This means that the spirits of Saul and his sons would soon be "disembodied" and join Samuel in Sheol.

Of course every single thing Samuel said to Saul was absolutely true, consistent to the facts and realities, and happened accordingly. Everyone should realize this is not the way a fraudulent deceiver operates. Therefore, what happened on this occasion is authentic and in accordance with God's revealed will. In addition, this event with king Saul plays an authentic part of the revelation about *Sheol*.

King David and his son

When king David sinned and committed immorality, a child was conceived by Bathsheba (II Sam. 11:5). After the exposure of David's total sin of the adultery and the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, judgment was placed upon David which included the death of the infant that had been conceived. Sometime after the birth of the child, it became seriously ill. David sincerely pleaded for the child, fasted and lay all night upon the ground. Several days later the child died. David's servants were afraid to even tell him of the fact out of fear of increasing David's sorrow. When David finally realized that the child had died, instead of worse expressions of sorrow, he washed and anointed himself, put on other garments, went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. Then he returned to his own palace and ate.

David's servants were dumfounded by the apparent irregularity of his actions, but when asked for an explanation David said, "*While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me'*"— II Sam. 12:21-23.

Of course, this meant that when the child died, it did not cease to exist. The *spirit* of the child was automatically safe. This safety was by virtue of the fact of Christ's death for all the sins of the world; this meant for all inherited sin-natures as well. That death could never be rejected by the child. Therefore David knew that one day he would be with his child. This passage also sheds light on all the infants who die in their infancy or pass out of this life in innocence. Those who die in innocence, who have not rejected God's merciful kindness, are positively safe.

II Sam. 22:6 "The chords of *Sheol* were round about me; the snares of death came..."

I Kings 2:6 "Let not his gray head go down to *Sheol* in peace."

I Kings 2:9 "Bring his gray head down to *Sheol* with blood."

Some references of this nature (I Kings) could possibly be understood to merely mean the grave if this was all we knew about Sheol. However, the context does not actually demand that it be understood as a mere grave! And in the light of all the other facts revealed about Sheol, it is by far better to understand it the same in every case. Thus did the Hebrew translators who wrote the Greek Septuagint.

The Book of ISAIAH

Isa. 5:14-16 "Therefore *Sheol* has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure; and Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry, and the jubilant within her, descend into it. *People* shall be brought down, *each man* shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in *judgment*."

There is no mistaking Sheol as a place of judgment for the rebels of Jerusalem.

This next passage from the prophet Isaiah is a very sober prophecy of God's judgment upon the nation of Babylonia. The king of Babylon begins in the foreground but will become the mere backdrop for the future destruction and judgment upon Lucifer, himself. Please read the following passages carefully—

ISAIAH 14:9-20

This is clearly a major passage on the subject of Sheol in the Hebrew Scriptures. Again, this is totally consistent with everything else we have learned so far about Sheol. There is no need, therefore, to try and explain it away as many try to do, who do not appreciate a literal understanding of the subject of Sheol as revealed in the Scriptures.

This is the second time we will hear conversation from those in Sheol. Samuel came up and spoke truthfully about the future death of king Saul. His words were not the words of a lying deceiver, but of accurate spiritual rebuke and a correct foretelling of the future. Now, here in Isaiah, the kings of the earth form a *reception committee* for the king of Babylon and beyond him, for Lucifer Himself—

Isa. 14:9 "***Sheol*** from beneath is excited over you (*king of Babylon*, verse 3; *Lucifer*, verses 12 & 13) to meet you when you come; it arouses for you the **spirits of the dead**, all the leaders of the earth; it raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. (10) They all respond and say

Isa. 14:11 to you, ‘*even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us.*’ (11) *Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to **Sheol**; Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering.*’ (12) How have you fallen from heaven, *O Star of the Morning* (or Morning Star, Lucifer), *Son of the Dawn!* You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations...

Isa. 14:15 Nevertheless you will be thrust down to **Sheol**, to the recesses of the **Pit**. (16) *Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you saying, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,*’ (17) *who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’* (18, 19) But you have been cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch...who go down to **the stones of the Pit**. (20) You will not be united with them in burial...”

In the context of this passage both the physical destruction (11) of the king of Babylon and the destruction of his soul in Sheol are given.

In this incredible passage, *Sheol* is clearly the residence of the departed spirits of the dead (verse 9). As we stated earlier, the Hebrew word *raphah* means “shades” (disembodied spirits) or “ghosts” of the dead (see Strong, Young, or Gesenius). Eight times this word is used in the Hebrew Scriptures. Four of those times it is used in connection with Sheol— Job 26:6; Psalm 88:10; Prov. 9:18 & Isa. 14:9. In this passage of divine revelation the occupants of Sheol are *conscious* and *talking*. Yet they are spoken of as being “*the dead*.” Consequently “death” as it applies to Sheol does not mean and cannot mean “cessation of being” or “non-existence.” Rather, the word “death” should be understood as “separation”—“separation,” first of all from the life of God, and then, separation of the spirit from the body. But never in the context of Sheol should “death” be thought of as non-existence. “Death” is actually a ***condition of existence***, separate from the life of God, and/or separation of the soul from the body.

This passage actually looks past the destiny of the king of Babylon to the future time when Lucifer will be cast out of heaven to the earth (Isa. 14:12; Luke 10:18 & Rev. 12:7-12). And then a very short time later Lucifer will be cast into the *bottomless Pit* (Isa. 14:15 & Rev. 20:1-3). No one doubts that Lucifer is an intelligent spirit creature who will thus end up in Sheol, Hades or Hell. Even that will not be his ultimate destiny.

Amazing as it may seem, we have here a fitting judgment upon Lucifer. If we will remember, at the original creation of Lucifer, many great and magnificent things were said about him. Earlier (in Ezekiel 28) we are informed that Lucifer was “*the anointed Cherub who covers*” and that he “*walked back and forth in the midst of the stones of fire*” (28:14). These stones of fire represented God’s very dwelling place in the “mountain of God” (see also Exodus 24:9,10 where they are referred to as a pavement of “*sapphire stones*”). These stones literally radiated their beauty. But now, at his inglorious end, Lucifer has instead nothing but “*the stones of the Pit*”—the just result of the rebellion of pride. Also, how just it will be for those, who reject the grace and mercy shown when Christ “died for our sins,” to allow them to “die IN their sins.”

According to this passage of Scripture, Lucifer is obviously not the only one to be in Sheol. According to the revelation of the passage, many other spirit beings have been long in residence there—the aroused dead, leaders and kings, greatly anticipating the event, will, as it were, be on the “*welcoming committee*” for him. They will speak to him as portrayed by the text.

So here again is an accurate and inspired look inside the depths of *Sheol* by the Hebrew Scriptures.

Isa. 28:15 “Because you have said...with *Sheol* we are at agreement...”

Isa. 28:18 “...your agreement with *Sheol* shall not stand...”

Isa. 38:10 “(Hezekiah) said...I am to enter the gates of *Sheol*...”

Isa. 38:18 “For *Sheol* cannot thank Thee...they that *go down to the Pit* cannot hope for Thy faithfulness.”

Isa. 57:9 “(The evil man)...sent your envoys...and made them *go down to Sheol*.”

Continuing in the Prophets

Ezek. 31:5 “In the day when he (Assyria) went down to *Sheol* I caused a mourning.”

Ezek. 31:16 “...when I cast him *down to Sheol* with them that *descend into the Pit*.”

Ezek. 31:17 “...they also went down into *Sheol*...”

Ezek. 32:21 “The strong among the mighty shall *speak to him* (Egypt) out of the midst of *Sheol*...”

Ezek. 32:27 “...that have gone down to *Sheol* with their weapons of war...”

* These statements in Ezekiel are **major statements** and we will look at them in context more carefully later under the designation of “*the Pit*.”

Hos. 13:14 “I will ransom them from the power of *Sheol*; I will redeem them
Hos. 13:14 from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O *Sheol*, where is thy destruction?”

Here is the third reference to the deliverance of the saints out of Sheol. The first was clearly intimated in the book of Job—Job 14:13. The second—I Sam. 2:6.

Amos 9:2 “Though they dig into *Sheol*, thence will I take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down.”

Jonah 2:2 “Out of the belly of *Sheol* cried I...(6) I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but Thou hast brought up my life from the *Pit*...”

Here, Jonah is impersonating the three day and three night sufferings of Jesus Christ in Sheol. This well-known event is referred to by Christ Himself in the Gospels.

Hab. 2:5 “(The drunkard) enlarges his appetite like *Sheol*, and he is like death—never satisfied.”

Chapter Five—SHEOL OF THE WRITINGS & OTHER DESIGNATIONS

(This is the third section of the Hebrew Scriptures.)

The Book of PSALMS

Psalm 6:5 “In *Sheol* who shall give Thee thanks?”

Psalm 9:17 “The *wicked* shall be turned into *Sheol*, even all *nations* that forget God.”

Psalm 16:10 “For Thou wilt not leave my soul in *Sheol*; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.”

Here is the fourth time in the Hebrew Scriptures that special deliverance from Sheol is mentioned concerning the righteous, and in this case it has to do with Christ Himself (Acts 2:27).

Psalm 18:5 “The cords of *Sheol* were round about me...”

Psalm 30:3 “O Jehovah, Thou hast brought up my soul from *Sheol*; Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the *Pit*.”

By now you have noticed the words “***The Pit***” used many times as a synonym for *Sheol*. As I said before, we will examine these later because they are very strong and give further information concerning the existence and conditions of Sheol.

Psalm 31:17 “Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in *Sheol*.”

Psalm 49:14 “They are appointed as a flock for *Sheol*; death shall be their shepherd...”

Psalm 49:14 “And their beauty shall be for *Sheol* to ***consume***...”

Psalm 49:15 “But God will redeem my soul from the power of *Sheol*.”

This very well may be the fifth reference to the eventual redemption of the righteous from Sheol.

Psalm 55:15 “let them go down alive into *Sheol*...”

Psalm 86:13 “And Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest *Sheol*.”

Psalm 88:3 “And my life draws nigh unto *Sheol*.”

Psalm 89:48 “What man is there...that shall deliver his soul from the power of *Sheol*?”

Psalm 116:3 “...the straits of *Sheol* got hold upon me...”

Psalm 139:8 “If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: If I make my bed in *Sheol*, behold, thou art there.”

Psalm 141:7 “Our bones are scattered at the mouth of *Sheol*.”

A great deal of commentary could be made on each of these passages. However, they fairly well speak for themselves.

The Book of PROVERBS and SONG of SOLOMON

Prov. 1:12 “Let us swallow them up alive as *Sheol*, and whole as they that go down to the *Pit*.”

Prov. 5:5 “Her steps take hold on *Sheol*.”

Prov. 7:27 “Her house is the way to *Sheol*, going down to ***the Chambers of Death***.”

Here is another description of Sheol, as stated earlier—“The Chambers of Death.”

Prov. 9:18 “...the dead are there; her guests are in the depth of *Sheol*.”

Prov. 15:11 “*Sheol* and *Abaddon* are before Jehovah; how much more the hearts of the children of men.”

Prov. 15:24 “To the wise the way of life is upward, that he may depart from *Sheol* beneath.”

Prov. 23:14 “Thou shall beat him with a rod, and shall deliver his soul from *Sheol*.”
(In other words, the lessons of discipline can effectively warn the child of Hell.)

Prov. 27:20 “*Sheol* and *Abaddon* are never satisfied.”

Prov. 30:16 “*Sheol* (is never satisfied).”

Ecc. 9:10 “There is no...wisdom in *Sheol* where you go.”

S of S. 8:6 “Jealousy is cruel as *Sheol*; the flashes thereof are the flashes of fire, a very flame of *Jah*.”

(* It might be added that the New American Standard Version has one more occasion for the use of “Sheol” and that is in Job 33:18—“He keeps back his soul from *Sheol* [or the Pit], and his life from perishing.”)

Other Important Designations

1.) I have listed all the passages that use the designation—**SHEOL**. These can be studied more carefully as you have time. And at the end I will be making a summary concerning Sheol and the other descriptions as they are used in the Hebrew Scriptures.

2.) We have also already noted the designation—**ABADDON**. See again Job 26:6; 31:12; Prov. 15:11; 27:20 & Rev. 9:11. Abaddon means ***destruction***, but not ***extinction***.

3.) We also pointed out the expression—**The CHAMBERS OF DEATH**, from Proverbs 7:27. Job of old asked the question—“Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?” (Job. 38:17). As we can see from the many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures on this subject, God is opening the doors on “the chambers of death” for the believer. And those doors will be opened even wider by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 4.) Another expression used is—**The LAND OF DARKNESS**. A few of the passages that refer to the darkness of Sheol are Job 10:21,22 & Psalm 88:6.
- 5.) **PRISON and PRISONERS** are also used in regard to Sheol; see Isa. 24:22; 14:17 & Job 3:18. It is intimated in Jonah 2:6 as a further description of Sheol with “bars” (v. 2). It is stated in the famous passage of Isaiah 61:1 that Messiah will release the “*prisoners*.” And then, in Ephesians 4:8 we are told that when Christ ascended from “the lower parts of the earth,” “He led captivity (a reference to those righteous souls imprisoned in Sheol) *captive*,” and “He ascended over them on high.”
- 6.) Another expression that is used to describe Sheol’s location is—**The LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH**. Thus it is described in Ezek. 26:20; 31:14,16,18 & 32:18, 24. In two of these verses this description is linked in the same passage with *Sheol* and *The Pit*—Ezek. 31:16 & 32:24. This is the similar expression used by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4 to describe the work of Christ in delivering “captivity.” Paul said “*What does it mean but that He first descended into the lower parts of the earth*” (Eph. 4:9).
- 7.) Lastly, there is the word **PIT** which deserves special attention because it is used so many times—approx. 32 or more times in reference to Hell. On at least 18 of these occasions it is linked with Sheol—note the following—

**“THE PIT”
& “The lower Parts of the Earth”**

The first word in the Hebrew for Pit is ***be-er***, and it simply means a *well* or *pit*. This word is used many times of just an ordinary pit dug or used by man for various purposes. However, it is also used as another reference to Sheol.

Psalm 55:23 “But Thou, O God, will bring them (the wicked) down to *the Pit of Destruction* (or the lowest Pit).” (In verse 15 is the word *Sheol*.)

Psalm 69:15 “May *the Pit* not shut its mouth on me.”

The second Hebrew word for Pit is ***bo-or***, and it means a cistern or prison. This likewise is sometimes used in reference to Sheol.

Psalm 28:1 “I become like those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Psalm 30:3 “O Lord, You brought up my soul from *Sheol*; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to *the Pit*.”

Psalm 30:9 “What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to *the Pit*?” (see v. 3).

Psalm 88:4 (Verse 3, “My life draws near to *Sheol*.”) “I am counted with those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Psalm 88:6 “Thou hast put me in *the lowest Pit*, in darkness in the depths” (see v. 3).

Psalm 143:7 “...lest I become like those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Prov. 1:12 “Let us swallow them alive like *Sheol*, and whole, like those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Isa. 14:15 “Yet you shall be brought down to *Sheol*, to *the lowest depths of the Pit*.”

Isa. 14:19 “...who go down to the stones of the Pit” (see v. 15).

Isa. 24: 21,22 “So it will happen in that day, that the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. (22.) And they will be gathered together like *prisoners in the Pit* (or dungeon) and will be confined in *prison*; and after many days they will be *punished*.”

A look at this whole chapter from Isaiah will show a fearful description of the impending judgment on the earth at the time of the second coming of Messiah. Verse 23 concludes with—“*For the Jehovah of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously.*” From the book of Revelation we learn that fallen angels will be cast out of Heaven and together with the wicked of earth will be placed in confinement until after the thousand year reign of Messiah (see Rev. 20:1-3 and Matthew 25:31,32,46). Thus, the earlier reference in Isaiah 24 describes Sheol as a prison-*Pit*.

Isa. 38:18 “For *Sheol* cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to *the Pit* cannot hope for Your truth.”

Ezek. 26:20 “(The wicked of Tyre) Then I will bring you down with those who descend into *the Pit*, **to the people of old**, and I will make you dwell in *the lowest part of the earth*, in places *desolate* from antiquity, with **those who go down to the Pit**, so that you will never be inhabited; and I shall establish glory in *the land of the living*.”

Thus, the occupants of Sheol or *the Pit* have been gathering there from ancient times and now the wicked of Tyre shall join them in this desolate place. The domain of the dead stands in stark contrast to “the land of the living.” Consequently, we have learned about the past occupants (the “ancients”), the present (the wicked of Tyre) and the future occupants (those so placed at the second coming of Messiah).

Ezek. 31:14 “For they have all been delivered to death, to the ***Nether Parts of the Earth***, among the children of men who *go down to the Pit*” (See also *Sheol*, vs. 15 & 16).

Ezek. 31:16 “I made the nations shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to *Sheol* together with those who *descend into the Pit*...all were comforted in ***the Nether Parts of the Earth***.”

Ezek. 31:17,18 “They also went down to *Sheol*...unto ***the Nether Parts of the Earth***.”

EZEKIEL 31 & 32

Chapter 31 of Ezekiel prepares the way for similar facts being brought out in the next chapter (32) and enlarged upon therein. Here another description of Sheol is given as “***The Nether Parts of the Earth***” (R.V.); some render it “*the Lower Parts of the Earth*.”—see verses 14, 16 & 18. This description is mingled with “*down to the Pit*” (verses 14 & 16), and “*down to Sheol*” (verses 15 & 16).

Ezek. 32:18 “(Speaking of Egypt) Bring it down, her and her daughters of the powerful nations, to ***the Nether Parts of the earth***,

with those who go down to *the Pit*.” (See *Sheol*, vs. 21 & 27.)

Ezek. 32:23 “...to the remotest part of *the Pit*.” (See *Sheol*, vs. 21 & 27.)

Ezek. 32:24 “...to *the lower parts of the earth*...with those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Ezek. 32:25 “...with those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Ezek. 32:29 “...with those who go down to *the Pit*.”

Ezek. 32:30 “...with those who go down to *the Pit*.”

This passage in Ezekiel (32:17-31) is one of the more interesting passages on the subject in the Hebrew Scriptures. God tells Ezekiel to lament for the land of Egypt because God’s punishment by the hand of the king of Babylon is coming upon her. Babylon has already conquered many nations and Egypt sits as a beautiful queen, but she is about to be destroyed as well (v. 19).

There is to be noted a certain continuous repetition in this whole passage. God will call each of the nations to witness to the Egyptians that they are soon going to be joining them in “*Sheol—the Pit*.” So the destruction of Egypt, and of the various nations before her, was actually twofold. First, their strong armies were, of course, slain with their graves scattered about. Each of those nations was once strong themselves and had much power “*in the land of the living*” (verses 23, 24, 25, 26, 28 & 32). Nevertheless, each of the nations will now be joined by the Egyptians who descend into “*Sheol*,” or “*the Pit*,” or “*the Nether (Lower) Parts of the Earth*.” Therefore, there will emerge here a contrast between “*The Land of the Living*” and “*the Nether parts of the Earth*,” which is *Sheol* or *the Pit*. In both realms the people are understood to be *animated* and *conscious*. Obviously, those alive on earth are physically and spiritually intact. Obviously, as well, those in *Sheol* are yet spoken of as alive and cognizant, and in one case will be called upon to speak to them “*out of the midst of Sheol*.” Amazing, is it not?

First, the Egyptians shall be “*cast down*” into “*the Nether Parts of the Earth with them that go down into the Pit*” (verse 18) The Egyptians will die by the sword (v. 20). Then “*the strong among the mighty shall speak to him (Egypt) out of the midst of Sheol, with them that help him*” (v. 21).

Next, the Assyrians are there in *Sheol* as well. On the one hand, they are said to be “*slain by the sword*” with “*the graves all around*” (v. 22). Yet on the other hand their “*graves are set in the uttermost part of the Pit*” (v. 23). This may be the only verse in the Bible where we have “*graves*” in Hell. Job spoke of making “*his bed in Hell*” (Job 17:13) and the Psalmist did as well—“*If I make my bed in Hell Thou are there*” (Psalm 139:8). Of course, these are metaphors and, no doubt, this use of “*grave*” is, as well. There can be “*graves*” for the bodies, and “*graves*” for the souls.

Next is Elam. There are all “*her slain by the sword*” in their graves. Yet they are also gone down “*into the Nether parts of the earth*” and “*down into the Pit*.” They at one time caused “*terror...in the land of the living*.” (Verses 24-27.)

Next are those of Meshech, Tubal, and their multitudes. Their graves are all around them. They also caused “*terror in the land of the living*.” But now they “*are gone down to Sheol with their weapons of war, and have laid their swords under their heads*,

and their iniquities are upon their bones.” Here we have a mixture of terms between the physical and the spiritual parts of death. (Verse 26).

Then the Edomites and the Sidonians who once caused terror in the earth are now with them *“that go down into the Pit “* (vs. 29, 30).

Finally Pharaoh *“shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude”* who were *“slain by the sword.”* And now he also *“shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised”* (v. 31).

A third Hebrew word for Pit is ***shachath*** and it has reference to *corruption, a trap or pit.* This is another use of “Pit” as a synonym for Sheol.

Job 33:18 “He keeps back his soul from *the Pit.*”

Job 33:22 “Then his soul draws near to *the Pit.*”

Job 33:24 “Deliver him from going down to *the Pit.*”

Job 33:28 “He has redeemed my soul from going to *the Pit.*”

Job 33:30 “To bring back his soul from *the Pit.*”

Psalm 103:4 “Who redeems your life from *the Pit.*”

Isa. 38:17 “Thou hast kept my soul from *the Pit* of destruction.” (See Sheol v. 18.)

Jonah 2:6 “I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet you have brought up my life from *the Pit*, O Jehovah my God.” (See Sheol, v. 2.)

See also “*Pit*” and “*Bottomless Pit*” in Revelation 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1 & 3.

Other Related References

Daniel 12:2

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

This passage of divine revelation is highly important for several reasons—

First of all, notice the word “awake.” What does this have reference to? Obviously it looks back in the sentence to *“those who sleep in the dust of the earth.”* Spirits do not sleep in the dust of the earth. All that we have learned so far tells us that the spirits of the dead go to Sheol. However, the physical bodies of the dead are said to return to the dust. Therefore the “awaking” of those who “sleep in the dust” pertains strictly to the physical bodies of the dead. It means that at a future day, as described in the context, the bodies of the dead will be raised from the dust of the earth and reunited with their spirits to constitute “living” once again.

Secondly, there are clearly two distinct categories of “awakening.” Some will be awakened to “everlasting life.” The quality of physical life that they will enjoy is “everlasting life.” This means that physically they will enjoy what is later to be called “immortality” of the body.

On the other hand, some others will awaken as well, but not to the same quality of existence. That means their bodies will merely be resurrected to normal human life, like a sick person who dies being brought back to previous physical life. Not only that, their awakening (resurrection) will be to “*shame and everlasting contempt.*” Now we all must realize that the only way you can have everlasting “shame” and “contempt” is if you have “*everlasting EXISTENCE*” in mortal bodies.

Isaiah 33:14 & 15

“The sinners of Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:

Who among us shall *dwell* with the *devouring fire*?

Who among us shall *dwell* with *everlasting burnings*?”

This is actually a prophetic vision that Isaiah sees. Its setting will be the time when Israel will see her King (verse 17). In contrast to the wicked, the righteous will “dwell on high” (verses 15 & 16). To “*dwell on high*” with their Messiah will no doubt be the Kingdom glory. In contrast, “*to dwell with devouring fire and everlasting burnings*” has be an existence just as certain as the other. However, it will be an existence or “dwelling” as described. This dwelling will no doubt be in Sheol until their appointed time for the judgment to which they are “reserved.”

Isaiah 66:24

The only reason this passage should be quoted is that the language from it is quoted or repeated in the Greek Scriptures and from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ as the terminology for future eternal punishment of the wicked. What Isaiah is inspired to say has to do with the destruction of the wicked who revolt against the coming reign of the Messiah. This will take place just prior to Messiah’s reign when all His enemies will be destroyed.

“Then shall they (mankind) go forth (out of Jerusalem) and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me (God-Messiah).
For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

It must be kept in mind that the application of these words made by our Lord Jesus Christ may be an altogether different proposition. This appears to be the physical *bodies* of those who revolted in that climactic period, whereas Christ may apply it to an altogether different period *after* the Kingdom reign, and to the Lake of Fire itself.

This Concludes Our Survey of the Revelation from the Hebrew Scriptures

I am quite sure that much more could have been said about each of the passages and that there is much more information to be found. *But I am also quite sure that this collection will refute* the stupidity of the accusation that “*very little is said in the Old Testament about Sheol and the punishment of the wicked.*”

Chapter Six—SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

As an introduction to this *Summary and Conclusion*, I would like to quote some words from one who is regarded as having done the “definitive work” on this issue of Hell and everlasting punishment of the lost. His work was 500 pages long. It is certainly a definitive work in cataloging what everybody else says about Hell. However, he spent only five pages on “Sheol of the Old Testament,” and then concluded that the Old Testament says very little about the subject. Not only throughout his book—but also on the subject of Sheol in those five pages—most quotes are what *others say* the Old Testament says and NOT what the Old Testament *actually says*. In quoting some of these people, he actually gives *his own conclusion* as well—

“The Old Testament ‘contains little information...’”

“The scarcity of Old Testament material.”

“Old Testament references to life after death are ‘few and rather obscure.’”

“Man is not an eternal soul trapped in a crude body.”

“Nowhere in the OT is the abode of the dead regarded as a place of punishment or torment.”

“The New International Version usually translates *sheol* by grave... This supports the conditionalists (his position)...”

“The state of the deceased cannot be called ‘life’ in any meaningful sense.”

“‘gravedom’ (is) a suitable translation.”

“Sheol...is not a place of punishment.”

All these statements are taken from *The Fire That Consumes* by E.W. Fudge, pages 77, 81 & 85 (said by some to be a definitive work on the subject of Hell from a “Conditionalist’s” perspective). I say again, he gave a definitive work all right, but certainly it was NOT on the subject of what the BIBLE says about Sheol. Over against his conclusions concerning the Old Testament, I place all the above material, which is specifically taken from the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures. You be the judge!

If you have read all the material to which I have drawn your attention, you will realize that I am endeavoring to allow the Bible to speak for itself—and it speaks with a clarity, definition and *overwhelming volume* that one cannot escape—whose pages equals about 45 pages compared to Fudge’s five. When I read Mr. Fudge’s book, I couldn’t help but smile in some amazement—not because it was not well written and well researched, but because it becomes very obvious, that in all the supreme diligence of his investigation, he virtually forgot to investigate the Bible very carefully for himself! His research was indeed magnificent. He must have read a whole library of literature about Hell as researched by others. However, reading all the commentaries about the subject is not at all the same as studying the subject directly from the Scriptures. Most certainly his conclusions, however, were not derived from what the Bible actually reveals!

SUMMARY of FACTS ABOUT SHEOL
Derived from the Hebrew Scriptures

I.

Sheol should never be confused with the physical grave.

- 1.) The normal word for *grave* in the Hebrew Scriptures is *queber*—not *Sheol*.
- 2.) There are many *graves* in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, *queber* is often used in the plural (approx. 29 times). Whereas there is only ONE *Sheol* in the Hebrew Scriptures. *Sheol* is never used in the plural.
- 3.) Men dug *graves* in the Hebrew Scriptures. Whereas, no one ever dug a *Sheol* because that was an understood impossibility.
- 4.) Many men “had *graves*” in the Hebrew Scriptures, but no one ever “had a *Sheol*.”
- 5.) Men’s bodies are laid out in their *graves*. No person’s body was ever laid out in *Sheol*.
- 6.) It is never stated that a body goes to *Sheol*. Bodies going into a *queber* is stated about 37 times.
- 7.) In fact, in only one instance in the Bible did anyone’s body ever go down into *Sheol*—and that was alive. The only thing ever said to be in *Sheol* were *spirits* of the dead. On the other hand, *quebers* are for bodies.
- 8.) Man was never said to put someone into *Sheol*. On the other hand, men are said to place people in a *queber* about 33 times.
- 9.) Men are said to possess *graves*, but no one was ever said to possess *Sheol*.
- 10.) Men often *touched and prepared graves*, but no one ever did so with *Sheol*.
- 11.) Normally, dead bodies don’t *talk* in their *graves*! In fact we are never told of one that did. On the other hand, we have several conversations recorded for us of those residing in *Sheol*.
- 12.) If you still think something like “gravedom” would be a better translation, then you still have the problem of explaining why it is placed in “*the lower parts of the earth*” instead of being where all the *graves* are.

II.

The Jewish Translators of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek Septuagint Uniformly rendered Sheol as Hades

Nearly every one of the 65 occurrences of *Sheol* in the Hebrew Scriptures is translated and rendered as *Hades* in the *Greek* translation. *Hades* was already commonly understood in the Grecian world and culture as the abode of the spirits of the dead. This translation was made by Hebrew scholars approximately 200 years before Christ. There was no question in the minds of these translators about the meaning of *Sheol* and what was the appropriate way to translate into the Greek in order to understand the significance

of its meaning. They were most certainly positioned far closer to the subject as understood in the Jewish religion and its proper renderings in the Greek language than any scholar or group of scholars in our modern age.

Consequently, in the Greek New Testament *Hades* was used, especially whenever there was a quote from the Hebrew Scriptures of *Sheol*. The definition of *Hades* was automatic in the Greek Lexicons because it was already understood in the Greek culture to have the very same reference to the abode of the disembodied spirits of the dead.

Furthermore in the Greek Scriptures a clear distinction is made between the realm of the physically dead (in the graves) and the realm of *Hades*, which was the same as *Sheol* of the Hebrew Scriptures; *see*—Rev. 1:18 & 20:13,14.

III.

The Location of Sheol

There is no debate about the fact that *Sheol* is always *downward* (over 25 times), in the “*depths*” (Prov. 9:18), the land “*beneath*” (Isa. 14:9 & Prov. 15:24), even “*beneath the mountains*” (Job 2:2), the “*lowest*” place (Ps. 86:13; Deut. 32:22, etc.), in the “*lower parts of the earth*” (Ezek. 26:20; 31:14,16,18 & 32:18,24, the same as Eph. 4:9), into “*the depths of the earth*” (Ezek. 31:14 & 32:18), the “*lowest Pit*” (Psalm 88:6), the “*lowest depth of the Pit*” (Isa. 14:15), the very “*lowest*” (Deut. 32:22 & Psalm 86:13), and absolutely nothing was “*deeper than Sheol*” (Job 11:8).

In addition *Sheol* is spoken of as being the extreme maximum depth which is the opposite of Heaven—Job 11:8; Ps.139:8 & Amos 9:2.

If God wanted us to know that *Sheol* was a place for the “*disembodied spirits*” in “the heart of the earth,” how else could He have told us?

IV.

Descriptive Terms of a Residence

“**Gather(ing)**” place for the dead, especially used for the righteous—see such passages as Gen. 49:29-33; 25:8, 17; 35:29; 37:35, etc.

“**House,**” as a residence—Job 17:13.

“**Chambers of Death**”—Prov. 7:27.

“**Prison**” with “**Prisoners**”—Isa. 14:17; 24:22; I Pet. 3:19,20

“**Gates**”—Isa. 38:10; Job 38:17, etc.

“**Doors**”—Job 38:17.

“**Bars**”—Job 17:16 & Jonah 2:6.

“**The Pit**” or “**The Lowest Pit**”—Prov. 1:12; 30:3; Isa. 14:15; 38:10;
Ezek. 31:16; Jonah 2:6, etc.

“**Stones of The Pit**”—Isa. 14:19.

“**Never Full**” or “**Satisfied**”—Prov. 27:20; 30:16; Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5, etc.

“**Abaddon**” (destruction)—Job 28:22; 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Prov.15:11; 27:20, etc.

“**Land of Separation**”—typology of Day of Atonement.

“**The Land of Darkness**”—Job 10:21.

“**The Nether (Lower) Parts of the Earth**”—Ezek. 31:14, 15, 18 & 32:18, 24.

This is in contrast to “*The Land of the Living.*”

Now some might look at all these expressions and say, “These are just figures of speech like metaphors—we can’t take them literally!” To which I would answer, JUST WHAT ARE THEY FIGURES OF? CAN THE REALITY BE ANY LESS THAN THE FIGURE?

V.

The Occupancy, All that Die—Souls or Spirits of Mankind

Though “bones may be scattered at the mouth of *Sheol*” (Psalm 141:7) , yet it is only the souls or “*disembodied spirits*” of the dead that “*descend into Sheol.*” The Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh*, and it can have a wide variety of meanings depending on the context. One of its meanings, as understood by the Hebrew people because of clear Biblical usage, was the inner spiritual nature of man, which departs his body at death and continues to exist in *Sheol*. Those who reject the existence of a *conscious* place of torment for the wicked will only use the definition that suits their philosophy—“soul is just life or animation,” they say, and “it ceases to exist when the breath (spirit) is taken away.” This amounts to a “fire escape” Fool-osophy, that in reality goes right into Hell. But our Savior shall take up this false idea more thoroughly later.

“For You will not leave My **soul** in *Sheol*, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption”—Psalm 16:10.

The best commentary on this passage is that of the inspired Apostle Peter. He not only segregated the location of the soul apart from the body, but he uses Christ, himself, as the primary example. Notice, please, Peter’s quote of this passage as recorded in the Greek New Testament—

“Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay” (Acts 2:27).

Now in the passage from the Psalms that Peter is quoting, David was talking about his own personal *soul* not being abandoned in *Sheol*. In addition, David was inspired to say that the Messiah would not see bodily corruption. Now the Apostle Peter will apply both principles to the one person, Christ—

“He (David) looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He (Christ) was neither abandoned to *Hades (Sheol)*, nor did His (Christ’s) flesh suffer decay” (Acts 2:31).

Thus, not only did Peter separate Christ’s soul as the person—“*HE*,” but Peter also placed Christ, as to His person, in *HADES*, the place of disembodied spirits of the dead, the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Sheol*.

So, let there be no misunderstanding, when the Hebrew Scriptures talk of “*souls*” or “*spirits*” in Sheol—it means the spiritual person apart from the body.

“O LORD, You brought up my **soul** from Sheol, You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the Pit”—Psalm 30:3.

“But God will redeem my **soul** from the power of Sheol...”—Psalm 49:15.

“And You have delivered my **soul** from the depths of Sheol”—Psalm 86:13.

See also Job 33: 18, 22, 28, 30 & Isa. 38:17.

“The (**disembodied**) **spirits** tremble, those under the waters and those inhabiting them. Sheol is naked before Him...”—Job 26:5,6.

“But he does not know that the (**disembodied**) **spirits** are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol”—Prov. 9:18.

“A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the **assembly** of the (**disembodied**) **spirits**”—Prov. 21:16.

“Sheol from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; It stirs up the (**disembodied**) **spirits** for you...” Isa. 14:9.

Also, please remember *Samuel* was brought up and spoke the truth.

VI.

Live People Went Down To Sheol.

On one rare occasion, the earth opened up, and some went down alive into *Sheol*. This means they bodily went down alive into *Sheol*. See Numbers 16:30-33. This was therefore, both a bodily judgment and a spiritual judgment against those who rebelled against God’s order at that time. Other writers, in later Jewish history, had hoped it would be possible for their wicked enemies to have the same judgment (see Psalm 55:15 & Prov. 1:12), but this was never realized again.

VII.

Classification of Souls—A. The Righteous

As we have seen, the righteous of past ages either are said to have anticipated going to *Sheol*, or else actually went into *Sheol*—Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, David, David’s son, etc., etc., etc.

There is never any indication that the righteous suffered any type of punishment in *Sheol*. In fact, Samuel felt “*disquieted*” by being “called up” to speak with king Saul. Genesis did indicate that the righteous were “gathered” together. Other Scriptures might indicate that the righteous had special treatment. For instance, as it was said even by a false prophet, who looked out upon the tents of Israel and said with envy, under the control of the Holy Spirit,—“*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his*” (Num. 23:10). In Psalm 73:24 it is stated, “*You (God) will guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.*”

Though Sheol was considered a place of “darkness” (Job 10:21,22, etc.), yet this did not prohibit the rich man in death being able to observe the realm of the righteous in the account by our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 16:19-31.

VIII.

The Righteous Expected Ultimate Deliverance

There are several indicators that the righteous looked forward to an ultimate deliverance from Sheol. This is first expressed by Job—

“Oh, that You would hide me in *Sheol*, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me *a set time, and remember me!*” (Job 14:13).

“The LORD kills and makes alive, He brings down to Sheol *and brings up*” (I Sam. 2:6).

“For *You will not leave my soul in Sheol...*” (Psalm 16:10).

“But God will *redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He shall receive me*” (Psalm 49:15).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me... To proclaim liberty to the captives, *and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*” (Isa. 61:1).

“*I will ransom them from the power of Sheol... Oh Sheol, where is your sting?*” (Hosea 13:14).

VIV.

Classification of Soul—B. The Unrighteous

Many are the indicators that the wicked are especially destined for Sheol. Often these serve as *warnings* to the lost. It is therefore inconceivable that—for the unrighteous—*Sheol* will not be a place of suffering. Annihilation would, theoretically, be blissful to one who has numerous heinous crimes to his list, for which he would only “cease to be.”

“They (the wicked) spend their days in prosperity, and suddenly they go down to *Sheol*” (Job 21:13).

“...*Sheol* (consumes) those who have sinned” (Job 24:19).

“The *wicked* shall be turned into *Sheol*, and *all nations that forget God*” (Psalm 9:17).

“Let the *wicked* be put to shame, let them be silent in *Sheol*” (Psalm 31:17).

“(The unrighteous) As sheep they are appointed for *Sheol*” (Psalm 49:14).

“(The prostitute) Her steps lay hold of Sheol” (Prov. 5:5).

“(The harlot) Her house is the way to Sheol” (Prov. 7:27).

“Therefore *Sheol* has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth without measure; her (the wicked of Jerusalem) splendor, her multitude, her din and the jubilant within her, descend into it” (Isa. 5:14).

X.

Condition of Sheol—Suffering for the Unrighteous

As we first learned in the book of Job, Sheol has an alternate descriptive term used which is *Abaddon*. *Abaddon* appears to be a name like Sheol and it means “*Destruction*.” Now since Sheol and /or *Abaddon* is located in “*the heart of the earth*,” this could not be speaking of the destruction of a physical body. We saw that on only one rare occasion did any live, physical bodies go there. Since the Scriptures also tell us that it is the *spirits* of the dead which go to *Abaddon*, then the act of destruction is upon the spirits of the dead. Likewise, since the Scripture indicates the dead are “*reserved*” for the day of judgment, then this *destruction* is actually a *continuous condition*, not a singular event. Remember also that the righteous dead are not said to be in *Abaddon*. This would seem to tell us that *Abaddon* is a section of Sheol reserved for the unrighteous. See the following—

“*Sheol* is naked before Him (God) and *Destruction* has no covering” (Job 26:6).

“But Thou, O God, will bring them down to *the Pit of Destruction*” Psalm 55:23).

“*Sheol* and *Destruction* lie open before the LORD” (Prov. 15:11).

“Thou hast kept my soul from *the Pit of Destruction*” (Isa. 38:17).

See also Job 28:22; Job 31:12; Psalm 88:12; Prov. 27:20 & Rev. 9:1-12.

Other descriptions of suffering in Sheol are indicated by the words “*consumed*” – Psalm 49:14; Isa. 5:14 & Job 24:19; “*no activity, planning or wisdom*” such as are on earth—Ecc. 9:10; “*Silence*”—Psalm 115:17; intense “*darkness*”—Job 10:21,22 & Psalm 88:6; *abandonment* such as on the Day of Atonement—Lev. 16; *punishment* and *confinement* “*like prisoners in the dungeon*”—Isa. 24:21,22; and finally “*fire*” is associated with Sheol at least four times—

“*...fire that consumes to Abaddon*” (Job 31:12).

“For a *fire* is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of *Sheol*...”
(Deut. 32:22).

“Jealousy is as severe as *Sheol*; its flashes are flashes of *fire*, the very *fire* of Jehovah” (Song of Sol. 8:6).

“Who among us can live with the *consuming fire*? Who among us can live with *everlasting burning*?” (Isa. 33:14).

There should be no problem therefore, when Christ says that the rich man was in “*torment*” and “*in agony in this flame*” (Luke 16:23,24). That understanding was not only depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures, which Christ knew most thoroughly, but it was also the belief of orthodox Judaism at that time.

I should not leave this section until I comment on one of the infidel statements by those who endeavor to, as they say, “take the Hell out of Hell.” To eradicate the possibility of there being a “fire” to punish the lost, they argue, “How can there be a fire in Hell and yet Hell be a place of darkness?” They smile as if to say, “you can’t have both.” But they don’t realize that in reality they are presenting God with the problem,

because it is God’s Word that reveals and states both facts. And I am sure that God just smiles, and says, “There is nothing impossible with Me!” I could also answer their paradox another way by observing that when I studied the science of Geology, I found out that the deeper we go into the earth, the DARKER it gets, and the HOTTER it gets, so that there must be some type of protection or provision used.

XI.

The Occupants Stirred up and Speak

Ezekiel 32:21—“The strong among the mighty ones shall *speak of him* (the king of Babylon) and his helpers from the midst of Sheol...”

This is actually similar in nature to the account in Isaiah 14. The one difference is that the account in Isaiah 14 also has long range prophetic significance.

I Sam. 28:15-19—“Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him And *buried him* in Ramah, in his own city” (v. 3).

“*And Saul said bring up Samuel for me*” (v. 11). Obviously king Saul did not go to Ramah and ask to have Samuel’s body dug up out of his grave. A dead body cannot know anything or say anything. Besides, decomposition would have done a lot of damage by this time. Apparently, Saul—as well as most every other Israelite—thought there was another part of man, namely his spirit, that was very much in existence and could communicate if God so allowed. Thus we have the words, “*I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth*” (v. 13). Then we have Samuel’s conversation with king Saul (verses 15, 16, 17, 18 & 19). It is a very intelligent conversation. It is most consistent, factual and prophetically accurate.

Isa. 14:9-15—“Those who see you (the king of Babylon, and beyond him, Lucifer) will gaze at you (apparently they have nonmaterial eyes), and consider you (apparently they have nonmaterial brains) saying....(apparently they nonmaterial voice boxes)...” Since we have already considered this, I need say no more.

XII.

SUMMARY DEFINITION OF SHEOL

In light of the overwhelming abundance of evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures, we should have no problem whatsoever in defining Sheol as—

The deep subterranean Chamber

which is the gathering place for the disembodied spirits of the dead,

both the righteous and the unrighteous.

For the righteous, it is a place of comfort awaiting their liberation;

whereas for the unrighteous, it is a place of suffering,

awaiting their eventual judgment.

It is also a place for certain fallen angels and eventually Satan himself.