

# Sheol, Hades, **Hell**, Paradise & Heaven

**D**o you know where you are going after this life? The Bible says that after this life we will go to places such as Abaddon, Hades, heaven, hell, Paradise, Sheol, and Tartarus. The vast majority of people believe that there is a life after this one. What are these places? The Old Testament talks about Sheol, the recesses of Sheol, Abaddon, and heaven, while the New Testament uses the terms Hades, hell or Gehenna, the abyss or Tartarus, and the lake of fire, Paradise, and heaven. This study is designed to explain these terms and help you understand what the Bible is saying.

## OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament the terms for death and our life after this world are vivid and serious reminders that each person will die someday. Those who reject God will not be going to a vacation spot or a place where they can talk with their friends and have a party. The Bible makes it clear there is no fun experienced in hell.

**SHEOL - THE GRAVE.** The King James Version uses the word Hell in the Old Testament rather than Sheol. However, most other translations use Sheol. It occurs 65 times in the Old Testament. It refers to both the grave and the temporary home of the wicked.

The next verse reveals that Sheol includes the grave or the place where our bodies are buried after the spirit has departed and where they return to dust.

Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall My hand take them . . . (NASB) Amos 9:2

Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?" (NASB) Job 17:16

The grave is a dark place of silence.

If I look for Sheol as my home, I make my bed in the darkness. (NASB) Job 17:13

The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. (NASB) Ps. 115:17

There the once incredible and brilliant mind will remember nothing and the body does not return to life.

No-one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from his grave? (NASB) Ps. 6:5

. . . he who goes down to Sheol does not come up. (NASB) Job 7:9



Since Sheol is synonymous with the grave, both the righteous and the wicked (unrighteous) will go there. The prophet Jonah was a righteous man even though he was a poor prophet. Yet, Jonah asks God to rescue him from Sheol, - which is characterized as the belly of the fish.

I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice. (NKJV) Jonah 2:2

Both the patriarch Jacob (Gen. 37:35) and King David (Ps. 88:3) expected to go to Sheol. It was the dusty, resting place to which our fleshly bodies go after death. Scripture makes it clear that even the wicked go.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.’” But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD.” Then it came about as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (NASB) Numbers 16:23,24, 30-33

Both the righteous and the wicked go to Sheol (Gen. 42:38) upon death. Sheol is the grave.

**SHEOL - HELL.** Sheol is also the place where the spirits of the wicked dead now exist. That is the message of the next verse which says that there is no hope for Thy faithfulness. That is not true for Christians.

Sheol from beneath is excited over you 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. (NIV) Isa. 14:9

For Sheol cannot thank Thee, Death cannot praise Thee; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy faithfulness. (NIV) Isa. 38:18

The next verses refer to Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus' fleshly body not decay, He was not left in hell. The New Testament teaches that he did visit the spirits in a portion of Sheol or hell which is apparently called the Pit (1 Pet. 3:18-20; 2 Pet. 2:4-5). Sheol and the pit refer to the same place.

... you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. (NIV) Ps. 16:10



O LORD, Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol; Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. (NIV) Psalms 30:3

**ABADDON.** Abaddon is another horrible place. The Old Testament refers to both Sheol and Abaddon as separate places (Job 26:6; 28:22; Proverbs 15:11; 27:20).

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied. (NASB) Prov. 27:20

Abaddon is not Sheol. It is an abyss or a deep part within Sheol according to Revelation 9:11. The passage Satan tells us that he is the angel and the king over the abyss.

They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. (NASB) Rev. 9:11

Later in Revelation we discover that Satan will go there

some day.

And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss . . . (NASB) Rev. 20:2-3

That is the same message of Isa. 14:15 which tells us that Satan will be imprisoned there some day.

Nevertheless you [Satan] will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. (NASB) Isa 14:15

Abaddon is a fiery place deep within Sheol.

For a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. (NASB) Deut. 32:22

**HEAVEN.** As we have seen, Sheol refers to the grave where man’s flesh and bones return to dust. Where did a righteous man’s spirit go? The answer is heaven. Heaven is pictured as being above while Sheol was below. In 2 Kings 2:11, God took the prophet Elijah up to heaven in a fiery chariot to be with Him forever. Scripture also says that God took Enoch up to heaven (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5). What is “up”? King David gives us the answer when he says that heaven is above and Sheol is below.

If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. (NASB) Ps. 139:8

Sheol has no holding power over the spirit of a righteous person. The scriptures say the bodies of the righteous may die and return to dust, but their spirits go “up to heaven” to be with God,

The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. (NASB) 1 Samuel 2:6

But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; for He will receive me. Selah. (NASB) Ps. 49:15

For Thy lovingkindness toward me is great, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. (NASB) Ps. 86:13

What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. (NASB) Ps. 89:48

God is not the God of the dead but those who live with Him according to Matt. 22:32.


**NEW TESTAMENT**  
The New Testament uses different terms to talk about the same places. These terms are very familiar to us - terms such as hell and Hades.

**HADES IS SHEOL.** Hades is the New Testament

parallel to Sheol. It refers to the grave and is a temporary place of punishment for the wicked. The Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament) uses Hades 61 times in place of Sheol. Just like Sheol, Hades represents death. Hades is the New Testament term for the place where our spirits return to dust. This is evident from this passage,

. . .he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. (NASB) Acts 2:31

The passage simply says that Jesus was not abandoned to Hades nor did He undergo decay. Hades is where our bodies

O.T. Name	N.T. Name
Heaven	Heaven or Paradise
Sheol - Grave - Hell - The Pit	 - Grave - Hades
Abaddon	Tartarus or Abyss

return to dust. Jesus assumes this is true when He tells Peter that Hades will not conquer the church (compare Matt. 16: 18 to Isaiah 38:10). In other words, the church will not die.

**HELL AND THE LAKE OF FIRE.** In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:23-31), Jesus reveals an important fact when He says the rich man was in Hades and Lazarus was in the bosom of Abraham (v. 16). Hades or hell are the same name for the place where the wicked dead will live forever - not the righteous. Only the wicked live in Hades.

*And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. (NASB) Matt. 11:23*

Ultimately the unrighteous will go into the lake of fire because God says that Hades will end up there.

*And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (NASB) Revelation 20:14*

The lake of fire is like hell since hell is also a place of eternal suffering (Mark 9:43, 48). It is a fiery place (Matt. 5:22; 18: 9; Mark 9:43; James 3:6). Hell is a place of judgment (Matt. 5:29, 30; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:45,47; Luke 12:5). According to Jesus, hell is where both body and soul are destroyed (Matt. 10:28).

**TARTARUS.** The New Testament also teaches that some angels who sinned were sent to Tartarus.

*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [Tartarus], putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment. (NIV) 2 Peter 2:4*

Tartarus is the New Testament name for Abaddon. It is there that Satan will be bound for 1,000 years before he ends up in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:1-2).

**PARADISE.** What does scripture mean by the phrase “bosom of Abraham” in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man? It appears the answer is Paradise since the Holy Spirit

tells us that Paradise is either in heaven or is heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4),

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows - was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. (NASB) 2 Corinthians 12: 2-4*

Paradise is in the third heaven. The first heaven is our atmosphere; the second heaven is our universe and the third heaven is where God lives. The third heaven is a spiritual realm. This is where Jesus promised the thief on the cross he would go. The thief believed in Jesus, and as a result,

*And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” (NASB) Luke 23:43*

The thief did not have to do anything. There was no time, no opportunity. He just believed, depended on Jesus, and as a result he went to Paradise (Rev. 2:7).

If we compare the Old Testament and the New Testament, we see that Sheol and Hades are below (Luke 10:15) and Paradise or heaven is above. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 Paul told us that he was taken up to the third heaven. In Acts 1:11 the apostles saw Jesus ascend upward into heaven.

**SINCE THE CROSS.** For the Old Testament saints and for New Testament Christians, death is wonderful. The Old Testament indicates that God received the Old Testament saints at death (Psalms 49:15) and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 tells us,

*Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight - We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (NASB) 2 Corinthians 5:6-8*



Heaven's Throne Room

## CONCLUSION

Because Jesus died and returned to life to forgive our sins if we want Him to, each man or woman can go to heaven. If we choose against Him, we go to hell. The decision belongs to each one to make. Those who choose not to believe are in real trouble because John 3:18 says,

**He who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (NASB) John 3:18**

And John 3:36 says those who do not believe have the wrath of God waiting for them. The New Testament says unbelievers go to Hades when they die, and they eventually go to hell or the lake of fire.

Today when Christians die, they immediately go to Paradise (2 Cor. 12:2-4) to be with Jesus,

**Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight - we are of good courage, I say, and prefer**

**rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (NASB) 2 Cor. 5:6-8**

Some day in the future Jesus Christ will return to earth to take all Christians to heaven. We call it the Second Advent. When this happens, all Christians who are alive at that time will meet Christ in the air,

**Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (NASB) 1 Thess 4:17**

They will instantly be changed and receive immortal or heavenly bodies. God has prepared a wonderful place for Christians. In Revelation 21-22 He calls it the new heaven and new earth. It is a place of joy, comfort, peace and harmony. There will no longer be any suffering of any kind. We will inherit all these things (Rev. 21:7). We will spend eternity with our Lord Jesus.