



### LESSON 16

## THE DOCTRINE OF "HELL" Part 1

### Introduction

Now that we have exposed the lie of the spurious "immortal soul" doctrine, we can proceed to examine one of its equally perverse offspring doctrine: the so-called "hell of fiery torment." According to this hideous teaching, "hell" is a fiery place where the "disembodied immortal souls" of the wicked are sent after death to be eternally tormented and punished. For centuries this despicable, unscriptural doctrine has been a tool of priestcraft for controlling people and frightening them into subjection to "church" authority. This blasphemous teaching corrupts the truth of the Scriptures and is a mockery of God's love and justice.

In this lesson we will begin a study of the word "hell" as used in the King James Bible. We will closely examine the Hebrew ("sheol") and Greek ("hades" and "gehenna") words from which it was translated. In doing so, we will find that the depraved concept of "everlasting torment in a fiery abode" is completely foreign and contrary to God's Word. This vile teaching, like its parent "immortal soul" doctrine, is a product of pagan mythology.



**Traditional Church Concept Of Hell**

## ORIGIN OF THE WORD "HELL"

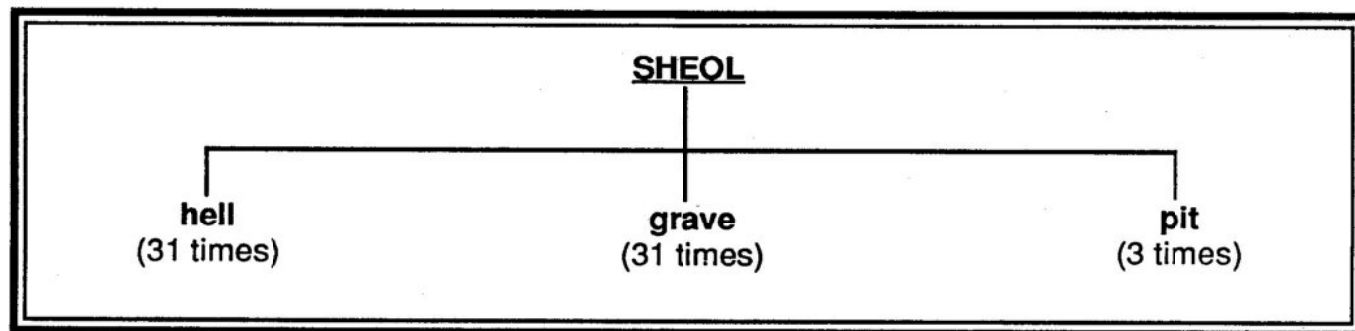
According to Webster's *New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged*, the English word "hell" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *helan*, meaning "to cover, conceal." The word "hell" originally conveyed no thought of heat or torment but simply of a "covered" or "concealed" place. To "hell" something simply meant to cover it up or bury it out of sight. In fact, in the Old English dialect, the expression "helling potatoes" meant, not to roast them, but simply to place the potatoes in the ground or in a cellar. Today's definition of "hell" represents a massive corruption of its original meaning.

The modern meaning of the word "hell" is graphically portrayed in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. However, this meaning is completely foreign to the original definition of the word. The idea of a "hell" of fiery torment dates back long before Dante or Milton and is found among the pagan religious teachings of ancient peoples in Babylon, Persia, Phoenicia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. While there are many variations in detail, the main features of hell as perceived by these ancient pagan cultures are essentially the same as the views held by today's Judeo-Christian theologians. In fact, the pagan tradition of a "fiery hell of eternal torment" is rigorously taught in the majority of churches today.

Since this pagan concept of "hell" has been a basic teaching in Christendom for many centuries, it is understandable why *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1965 ed., Vol. 14, p. 81) states, "Much confusion and misunderstanding has been caused through the early translators of the Bible persistently rendering the Hebrew Sheol and the Greek Hades and Gehenna by the word hell". Nevertheless, by making an honest comparison of the texts in which these original words appear, with an open mind, sincere Bible students can arrive at a correct understanding of their true significance. This is what we will do in this study.

## OLD TESTAMENT USE OF "HELL"

The word "hell" appears 31 times in the King James version of the Old Scriptures. In each of these 31 appearances, it was translated from the Hebrew word "**sheol**" (#7585 in *Strong's Concordance*). The Hebrew word "sheol" is used a total of 65 times in the Hebrew Old Scriptures. In addition to the word "hell," it was also translated into "grave" and "pit." The chart below summarizes the translators' rendering of "sheol."



## Meaning of "Sheol"

*Strong's Concordance* defines **sheol** (#7585) as "hades\* or the world of the dead." Notice that it is not defined as the world (domain) of the living. Yet, the modern "hell" supposedly contains living, conscious "immortal souls" – a significant contradiction. *Strong's* also indicates "sheol" comes from a root (#7592) that means "to inquire." "To inquire" implies something not known, and thus hidden from sight, as is signified by the Saxon word *helan* (concealed), from which we get "hell" (covered). It is important to note that "sheol" in the Old Scriptures is always associated with death rather than life. Also, the "sheol" of the Old Scriptures is not associated with the concepts of fire and torment as is the pagan concept of "hell."

(\* "Hades" is the Greek word meaning "unseen." It will be discussed in the next lesson.)

## The Wicked Go to "Sheol"

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Psalms 9:17 states, "The \_\_\_\_\_ shall be turned into **hell** [sheol], and all the nations that forget God."

The above verse indicates the wicked go to "sheol." However, note that no mention is made that they are alive while there or that they suffer any kind of eternal torment in fire. The problem is that when many people read such scriptures as Psalms 9:17, they read into them their traditional views. Instead of thinking of "sheol" as the common domain of the dead for both the righteous and the wicked, they think of the "hell" of apostate tradition, the supposed place of endless torment of "disembodied souls" of only the unrighteous.

## Jacob to Go to "Sheol"

### FIND THE ANSWERS

2. In Genesis 37:35 Jacob says, "For I will go down into the \_\_\_\_\_ ..." (Compare with Genesis 42:38; 44:29 and 31)
3. In the above cited verses, the word "grave" is translated from what Hebrew word?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Not only do the wicked go to "sheol," but Jacob (Israel) stated he was to go there also. Those who insist the wicked go to a place of endless fiery torment must also logically admit that the father of the Israelites was to go there as well, since God's Word states that both go to the same place – "sheol." To think that Jacob, a man of God who is named in Hebrews 11 as an heir of salvation, was to go to the "hell" as most people traditionally think of it is absurd. What is logical, however, is that both the righteous and the wicked die and are buried – i.e. they are in "sheol": the state or condition of death.

## Job to Go to "Sheol"

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Job 17

4. Speaking of death, Job states in verse 13, "If I wait, the \_\_\_\_\_ is mine house..."
5. In verse 16 Job speaks of death as going "down to the bars of the \_\_\_\_\_..."
6. Both of the answers above are translated from what Hebrew word? \_\_\_\_\_

The preceding verses show that Job spoke of going to "sheol." In fact, as the following verse indicates, he even desired to go there to escape his troubles.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. According to Job 14:13, where did Job desire that God hide him? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The above answer is translated from what Hebrew word? \_\_\_\_\_

If "sheol," the same place where the wicked go after death, were the traditional "hell of eternal torment" promoted by the churches today, then why would Job wish to go there to escape his troubles? That makes no sense, as he would be trading temporary suffering during his short lifetime for "everlasting torment." However, what does make sense is that Job longed for "sheol" (the state of death), because it would bring an end to his suffering.

Note how Job wanted to be hidden in "sheol;" he wanted God to keep him secret (Job 14:13). These expressions are equivalent to the original definition of "hell" (to cover up, to conceal) and the meaning of "sheol" (unknown or unseen). However, the traditional corrupted meaning of "hell" (endless torment in fire) has destroyed this equivalency for most in Christendom today.

### King Hezekiah Expected to Go to "Sheol"

#### FIND THE ANSWERS

##### Read 2 Kings 18:1-7

3. Which of the following statements are true concerning Hezekiah, king of Judah?
  - A. He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.
  - B. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel.
  - C. He followed the LORD and kept His commandments.
  - D. The LORD was with him.
4. Speaking of his premature death due to sickness, Hezekiah stated in Isaiah 38:10, "...I shall go the gates of the \_\_\_\_\_."
5. The above answer is translated from what Hebrew word? \_\_\_\_\_

King Hezekiah, a king unlike any of the kings of Judah before or after him (2 Kings 18:5), clearly stated he was going to "sheol" when he died. Would it be reasonable that such a faithful man of God would expect to go to a place of "eternal fiery torment" following his death? Obviously, he believed no such nonsense.

## Jonah in "Sheol"

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Jonah 1:17 states that Jonah was \_\_\_\_\_ by a great fish and was in its belly for three days and nights.

#### Read Jonah 2

2. Verse 1 indicates he prayed to God out of the fish's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Verse 2 says God heard Jonah's cry from out of the "belly of \_\_\_\_\_."
4. The above answer is translated from what Hebrew word? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Verse 10 states the fish \_\_\_\_\_ Jonah out upon dry land.

Here we have the prophet Jonah alive in "the belly of hell" ("sheol"). How could a place of "eternal fiery torment" exist in the stomach of a mortal fish living in water? How did Jonah get into "hell" without dying when supposedly people go there after they die? How did Jonah get bodily out of "hell" after only three days and nights when supposedly a person's stay there is forever (eternally)? Why would one of God's prophets be sent to a place of fiery torment reserved for the wicked? These questions expose the foolishness of the "hell-fire" doctrine.

Jonah was in the "belly of hell" in the sense that if he had remained in the fish's stomach long enough, it would have been his grave – i.e. his death would have been certain. He would have been "covered up" or "concealed" (the original meaning of "hell"); he would have been "unknown, unseen" in the state of death (sheol).

## David in "Sheol"

### FIND THE ANSWERS

6. In Psalms 16:10 David says, "For thou [the LORD] wilt not leave my soul in \_\_\_\_\_ ..."
7. The above answer is translated from what Hebrew word? \_\_\_\_\_

David clearly expected to be in "hell" (sheol) and expected God to deliver him from it. David was talking about being raised out of the state of death. This proves that the "hell" (sheol) of the Old Scriptures is something from which one can be delivered or rescued, unlike the traditional hell of Christendom which supposedly holds its unfortunate occupants forever. The "hell" (sheol) of the Old Scriptures is the resting place of the wicked as well as the men of God, like David.

## David's Deliverance From "Sheol"

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Psalms 18:1-6

1. According to verse 3, David prayed that God would save him from his \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In verse 4 David states, "The sorrows of \_\_\_\_\_ compassed me ..."
3. In verse 5 he says, "The sorrows of **hell** [sheol] \_\_\_\_\_ me about ..."

Psalms 18 is a song David wrote in which he praised God for delivering him from the hand of his enemies – not from some so-called place of eternal fiery torment. The similarity of wording in verses 4 and 5 indicates that David understood "sheol" (hell) as the state or condition of death. David obviously was facing sure death at the hands of his enemies and would have died had it not been for God's intervention. David was not sorrowful about the possibility of being tormented in everlasting fire. Rather, he was sorrowful about the thought of being killed by his enemies – i.e. the end of his life.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Psalms 116:1-4

4. Verse 3 states, "The sorrows of \_\_\_\_\_ compassed me, and the pains of **hell** [sheol] gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow."
5. The prayer in verse 4 states, "O LORD, I beseech thee, \_\_\_\_\_ my soul."

Here is another example of a prayer to God for deliverance from "hell" (sheol). The "sorrows" and "pains" referred to in this passage are those experienced by the Psalmist during his lifetime – not during some nebulous future life. Note that "death" and "hell" are again used together as they were in Psalms 18.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Psalms 30

6. In verse 1 David extols God because He \_\_\_\_\_ him up.
7. David states in verse 3 that God brought him up from the **grave** [sheol] and kept him \_\_\_\_\_ so that he would not go down to the \_\_\_\_\_.

Here, again, we see David thanking God for delivering him from death – from "sheol." It is obvious from the context that David faced death at the hand of his foes, but God kept him alive. It is ridiculous to think that David, a man who trusted in God and praised Him continually, would be concerned about going to the traditional "hell-fire" of today's churches.

## SCRIPTURAL DESCRIPTIONS OF "SHEOL"

The Old Scriptures give some clear descriptions and characteristics of "sheol" which can help us to better understand what it represents. These examples will also show that the "sheol" of the Old Scriptures is not the traditional "hell-fire" of Christendom.

### "Sheol": A Place of Silence

#### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

1. Psalms 6:5 states, "For in death there is no \_\_\_\_\_ of thee [the LORD]: in the **grave** [sheol] who shall give thee \_\_\_\_\_?"
2. Psalms 31:17 says, "...let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be \_\_\_\_\_ in the **grave** [sheol]."
3. Isaiah 38:18 states, "For the **grave** [sheol] cannot \_\_\_\_\_ thee [God], death cannot \_\_\_\_\_ thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."
4. According to Psalms 115:17, "The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into \_\_\_\_\_."

According to the above passages, there is no praising, no celebrating nor remembrance in "sheol." Instead, "sheol" is characterized by silence. This Biblical description is completely opposite from the Judeo-Christian tradition of "hell-fire" which is described as a place of ceaseless shrieking, howling, cursing and screaming.

### No Life in "Sheol"

#### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

5. Ecclesiastes 9:10 states, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no \_\_\_\_\_, nor \_\_\_\_\_, nor \_\_\_\_\_, nor \_\_\_\_\_, in the **grave** [sheol], whither thou goest."

The passage above plainly states that after a person dies – i.e. goes to "sheol" – he no longer is alive. From that point on, he is dead. He no longer possesses any of the mental or bodily functions of life. A dead person (a person in "sheol") cannot do anything, think anything or feel anything. All knowledge and wisdom ceases. This is what God's Word teaches.

Traditions of men, however, teach the opposite of Scripture. Man's wisdom contradicts God's Word by teaching that a person continues living after he dies – i.e. he has an "immortal soul." Man's doctrine teaches that deceased wicked people go to a place called "hell," which is described as a fiery place of eternal torment and suffering. Using this pagan definition of "hell" for the "sheol" of the Old Scriptures is an outright distortion of the truth of God's Word.

## "Sheol": A Place of Darkness

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10

1. According to verse 6, "The LORD \_\_\_\_\_, and maketh \_\_\_\_\_ : he bringeth down to the **grave** [sheol], and bringeth up."
2. Verse 9 states, "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ ..."
3. Speaking of death Job states in Job 17:13, "If I wait, the **grave** [sheol] is mine house: I have made my bed in the \_\_\_\_\_."

The preceding verses associate death and "sheol" with darkness. Scripture often uses the word "darkness" when referring to a lack of life. Since there is no life in "sheol" (the state of the dead), it is logical that darkness would be used to describe it. The literal "hell of endless fire" taught by the traditional Judeo-Christian churches, however, certainly is not a place of darkness and silence.

## Going to "Sheol" Alive

"Sheol" is used to describe a fissure in the earth into which men can fall. Also, it figuratively describes a condition of defeat or captivity. We have already examined the example of the prophet Jonah who went into the "belly of hell [sheol]" while still alive. Let's look at some other examples.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Numbers 16:1-33

4. According to verse 33, Korah and his associates "went down \_\_\_\_\_ into the **pit** [sheol], and the earth closed upon them: and they \_\_\_\_\_ from among the congregation." (See also verse 30)
5. Speaking of the wicked, Psalms 55:15 says, "Let \_\_\_\_\_ seize upon them, and let them go down \_\_\_\_\_ into **hell** [sheol] ..."
6. Referring to what sinners say, Proverbs 1:12 states, "Let us swallow them up \_\_\_\_\_ as the **grave** [sheol]; and whole, as those that go down into the pit."

Note that in the three preceding verses, the words "pit," "hell" and "grave" are translated from the same Hebrew word: "sheol." What is meant by "quick" in the second reference is shown as meaning "alive" in the other two verses. Korah and his friends were victims of a type of earthquake in which they were buried (covered out of sight) – i.e. swallowed – alive. Obviously, they remained alive for only a brief moment. There is no mention or indication that they fell into a fiery place where they were then tormented endlessly.

### Deliverance From "Sheol"

#### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

1. Proverbs 15:24 states, "The way of life is above to the \_\_\_\_\_, that he may \_\_\_\_\_ from hell [sheol] beneath."

#### **Read Proverbs 23:13-14**

2. According to verse 13, what will keep a child from dying? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Verse 14 indicates that parental correction will \_\_\_\_\_ a child's soul from hell [sheol].

The verses above express the idea of going into "sheol" prematurely as a penalty for folly and disregard for God's Word. Just as Korah's rebellion against God led to his premature death, those who live contrary to God's laws suffer death, both spiritually and physically. These verses do not state nor suggest anything about a hell of fiery torment. In fact, the traditional church concept of "hell-fire" teaches that there is no deliverance, departing or escaping from their mythical "hell," which is in direct contrast to God's Word.

### Destruction of "Sheol"

Man's pagan "hell-fire" concept portrays a place of eternal, endless torment – i.e. a place of everlasting existence. However, the "sheol" of the Old Scriptures can be destroyed.

#### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

4. God states in Hosea 13:14, "I will \_\_\_\_\_ them from the power of the **grave** [sheol]; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O **grave** [sheol], I will be thy \_\_\_\_\_ ..."

Logically, anything that is to be destroyed cannot be eternal. Destruction and endlessness are mutually exclusive terms. God plainly states that He will destroy "sheol" – i.e. He will put an end to it That is accomplished through the process of resurrection (rising from the dead).

## "Sheol" Is in God's Presence

Many who adhere to the pagan hell-fire doctrine teach that "hell" is eternal banishment from God's presence. However, Scripture disproves this idea.

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

#### **Read Psalms 139:1-10**

1. Verse 7 poses the question of where one could flee from God's \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Verse 8 states, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou [God] art there: if I make my bed in \_\_\_\_\_, behold, thou art there."
3. From what Hebrew word is the above answer translated? \_\_\_\_\_
4. According to Proverbs 15:11, "**Hell** [sheol] and destruction are \_\_\_\_\_ the LORD ..."

Obviously, "hell" (sheol) is not out of God's presence. One cannot escape God by being in "sheol." God has complete control over "sheol" – i.e. over the dead. He has the power to raise those in "sheol" to life.

### **CONCLUSION**

We have seen in this lesson that the meaning of the Hebrew word "sheol" (hidden from sight) corresponds to the meaning of the Greek word "hades" (unseen) and to the original intent of the English word "hell" (conceal, cover). However, the distorted traditional meaning of "hell" as used by the Judeo-Christian churches is in complete contradiction to what the Old Scriptures teach concerning "sheol." The chart below summarizes the contrast in doctrines.

<b><u>SHEOL</u></b> What the Bible Teaches	<b><u>HELL-FIRE</u></b> What Man's Tradition Teaches
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. It is a state of death.</li><li>2. Both the righteous and the wicked go there.</li><li>3. One can be delivered (saved) from it.</li><li>4. It can be destroyed.</li><li>5. It ends suffering and trouble.</li><li>6. It is a place of darkness.</li><li>7. It is a place of silence.</li><li>8. It is cessation of life.</li><li>9. It is before God's presence.</li><li>10. It is a place of rest.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. It is a state of immortal life in torment.</li><li>2. Only the wicked go there.</li><li>3. One cannot be removed from it.</li><li>4. It is eternal, endless, everlasting.</li><li>5. It inflicts agonizing torture.</li><li>6. It is a place of abundant fire.</li><li>7. It is filled with shrieking and cursing.</li><li>8. It is not cessation of life.</li><li>9. It is eternal banishment from God's presence.</li><li>10. It is a place of torture and anguish.</li></ol>

Now that we have a Biblical understanding of the concept of "sheol," we will examine in the next lesson the New Scriptures' use of the word "hell."



## ANSWER KEY

### LESSON 16

## THE DOCTRINE OF "HELL" Part 1

### Page 153

1. wicked
2. grave
3. sheol (#7585)
4. grave
5. pit
6. sheol (#7585)

### Page 154

1. grave
2. sheol (#7585)
3. all are true
4. grave
5. sheol (#7585)

### Page 155

1. swallowed
2. belly
3. hell
4. sheol (#7585)
5. vomited
6. hell
7. sheol (#7585)

### Page 156

1. enemies
2. death
3. compassed
4. death
5. deliver

### Page 156 (cont'd)

6. lifted
7. alive; pit

### Page 157

1. remembrance; thanks
2. silent
3. praise; celebrate
4. silence
5. work; device; knowledge; wisdom

### Page 158

1. killeth; alive
2. silent; darkness
3. darkness
4. alive; perished
5. death; quick
6. alive

### Page 159

1. wise; depart
2. correction (beating him with the rod)
3. deliver
4. ransom; destruction

### Page 160

1. presence
2. hell
3. sheol (#7585)
4. before

**Notes:**