

Heaven and Hell, Present and Future: Destinations beyond the Grave

Sermon 2: *Sheol* in the Old Testament

Two Contrasting Explanations of *Sheol* in the Old Testament, Each with Flaws:

I. A Picturesque Word for Physical Death and the Grave

Genesis 37:34–35; Numbers 16:28–34; Psalm 55:12–15; Isaiah 38:9–11, 17–19; Job 17:13–16; 24:19–20; Isaiah 14:9–11; Ezekiel 32:17–28; Psalm 16:9–11; Acts 2:24–31

II. A Netherworld with Compartments of Paradise and Punishment

a. The Old Testament Evidence for This View

1 Samuel 28:11–14, 19

b. The New Testament Evidence for This View

Luke 16:22–31; Ephesians 4:7–10

c. The Problems of a Netherworld for Old Testament Saints

Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11–12a; Psalm 9:17; 23:6; 49:7–9, 12–15; 73:1–3, 18–19, 23–28; Luke 9:30–31; 23:39–43; 2 Corinthians 12:2–4; Revelation 2:7

The Real Issue: Did the Old Testament saints already have full forgiveness and remission of sins before Christ's death and resurrection? Or were they temporarily barred from God's heavenly presence, though "saved on credit" (as some have put it)?

Romans 3:21–26; 4:5–8; John 11:23–26

Conclusion: the Old Testament word *sheol* sometimes refers to the grave, sometimes to the intermediate state in general (that is, the disembodied condition which begins at death), and perhaps sometimes to the place and condition of torment for the unrighteous after death.

We have already seen hints of a tormented existence for the wicked immediately following physical death; this doctrine was not made fully plain, however, until Jesus Christ came. The next sermon will examine the New Testament teaching on this topic.