

Sermon to the saints of God at Topeka – Sunday, March 11, 2018

Preachers don't preach on hell. Some exalt God's love to the exclusion of his wrath – which is the preaching of 'another gospel.' It is as dangerous and soul-damning as false preaching gets – and this is not just a danger to those who sit in the pews of false churches and who believe false doctrines in the first place. It is warned about to those within the visible body of believers throughout time. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, warns those at the churches of Galatia, for example (which were: Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Antioch):

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. - Gal. 1:6-8

Some preachers (and therefore MANY people) do not believe there is any hell at all, or they attribute to 'hell' some fanciful notion that does not comport with scripture at all, but they wrest scripture concerning the love and mercy of God to ultimately bastardize and pervert both concepts of heaven (God's love and mercy) and hell (God's wrath and judgment). They think it impossible there can be such a place – that it is inconsistent with the mercy of God - that such a 'place' could never be proven to exist. They say it is too awful an idea to really be true. The oldest false preaching that we have evidence of is on the very subject.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: - Ge 3:4

Ryle: If I never spoke of hell, I should think I had kept back something that was profitable and should look on myself as an accomplice of the devil. Beware of new and strange doctrines about hell and the eternity of punishment. Beware of manufacturing a God of your own: a God who is all mercy, but not just; a God who is all love, but not holy; a God who has a heaven for everybody, but a hell for none; a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own.

The proper, Biblical concept of hell is completely missing from the pulpits, and therefore from the moral culture of this world, though there is a tremendous swirl of myth, legend and metaphor surrounding hell that has nearly always been draped across the landscape of our consciences, whenever or wherever we've lived. A smattering of Western culture examples includes:

- Literature: Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Dante's *Inferno*), Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*, Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*

- Film: *Heaven Can Wait, Deconstructing, What Dreams May Come, Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*
- TV: *The Good Place, The Twilight Zone*
- Comics: *Dilbert, The Far Side, Hellboy, Spawn*
- Video games: *Mortal Kombat, Diablo, Doom, Minecraft*

Even in our music, humor and everyday slang sayings, different conceptions of hell, all no doubt influenced and intermingled with one another, are common, every day occurrences. People use 'hell' to curse each other: 'Go to hell!' or 'God Damn You!' They use 'hell' to be emphatic: Q - 'Would you like some chocolate crepes? A – 'Hell, ya!' (or 'hells to the yeah'). Hell is even used to denote a high degree of goodness or pleasure: 'That monster truck pull was hella good!' Most people have some awareness of 'hell' – and have some ideas surrounding hell – although many of them are misguided and not Biblical. Consider the scripture:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. - Pr. 9:10

Why fear? Fear of what? We know that a reverent fear of God Almighty is meant, that blossoms into the sum of internal religion in those whose hearts God works. But without offence and therefore without consequence, penalty or judgement (eternal hell), what is there to fear? (So, even the *fear of the Lord*, as a concept, therefore, is a topic that most worldly preachers steer clear from, as well.)

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. – 2Cor. 5:11

If we stand in need of a Savior, what do we need saving from? From the completely deserving and earned sentence for sin (hell – the eternal wrath of God) that the just Judge most certainly imposes.

We preach on all forms of sin – and we preach with clarity and no ambiguity the penalty for sin, which is eternal hell. We clearly preach that all men are sinners from the womb, and therefore are all, in the justice of God, deserving of hell. And we preach that all men, therefore, stand in need of a savior from that unimaginably awful fate, as none can pay their debt. And we preach that God, in His mercy, has provided a savior who reconciles us unto Him by the deep, mysterious sacrifice that was designed in the council halls of eternity. Christ is the only salvation; we preach what Christ preached:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. - John 14:6

The implication here, and explicitly stated scores of places elsewhere in scripture, is that there is only heaven and hell, as the long homes of men's never-dying souls – and only redemption through Christ yields heaven – all other paths end in hell.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: - Mt 7:13

Christ preached boldly and plainly on hell - and that is one reason, to my mind, why it is so pernicious that phony preachers don't preach on it. They skirt right around the need for salvation and get right to the warm, nougat center that fills their coffers – the love, tolerance and inclusion of hacky sack Jesus that saves you from something that doesn't really exist and if it did exist you wouldn't need to worry because hacky sack Jesus saves all people from it anyway, so it really wasn't a thing in the first place. (But don't you feel good, now?) Christ gave all preachers the model for preaching:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. - Mark 9:43-48

But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. - Lu 12:5

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? - Mt 23:33

Hell is clearly stated as the just recompense for sin throughout the scripture. Preaching the Gospel with fidelity without preaching on hell is simply not possible. We know, and are clear about, these two bedrock principles of our collective faith. So, what I aim for in this present investigation is to parse out what we can know, with some degree of scriptural evidence, about hell. This might seem, at first blush, both: a) not worth the time, in that we might think we know all there is to know about hell already; and, b) of no consequence, as we know enough to know that it is bad, and therefore digging into the details is irrelevant to our walk. While we should

endeavor to not speak beyond what scripture plainly states, we should also endeavor to know and teach those matters which can be known – in our public ministry, as teachers of our children and one another, as well as having the details more satisfactorily fleshed out in our own minds.

The approach that I will take is: to first get as clear as the evidence will allow in terms of the meanings of the words both rendered as and used in close connection to the English word ‘hell;’ and second, Lord willing next Sunday, to use that evidence to reveal a somewhat more complete and satisfying schema of hell, as well as attempt to speak to a few of the more seemingly problematic Bible stories surrounding the topic.

The English word ‘hell’ appears in the Bible 54 times; however, the concept of eternal punishment is expressed or implied literally thousands of times in scripture. Simply put, it is one of the most-offt concepts expressed in the Bible. Nearly every time we read any of the following words or phrases (plus many others that I didn’t include), the concept of hell (or eternal punishment) is implied: wrath, destruction, destroy, cut off, Hinnom, valley of Hinnom, valley of the son of Hinnom, valley of the children of Hinnom, valley of slaughter, Tophet, fiery lake, lake of fire, eternal fire, everlasting fire, sin, abomination, torment, darkness, outer darkness, grave, death, second death, the pit, prison, worm, weeping, gnashing of teeth. (I’m sure you can all think of more – but you get the idea.) Of the 54 times that the English word ‘hell’ is used, there are 4 different words (one Hebrew, two Greek, and one valley of the children of Hinnom Hebrew word that got ‘Greeked’) that get translated into ‘hell.’

The **first** is the Hebrew word *sheol* (shee-ohl), and it means:

- 1) underworld, grave, hell, pit
- 2) Sheol - the OT designation for the abode or realm of the dead
- 3) place of no return

This word is found in the Bible sixty-five times (all in the OT). It is translated as ‘the pit’ three times, ‘the grave’ thirty-one times, and ‘hell’ thirty-one times.

The **second** is the Greek word *hades* (hah-days), and it means:

- 1) name Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions
- 2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead
- 3) later use of this word: the grave, death, hell

In Biblical Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits – the name itself being derivative of Ancient Greek mythology, but the concept itself being aligned with the OT concept of ‘Sheol.’

This word is found in the Bible 11 times (all in the NT). It is translated as 'hell' ten times and as 'the grave' once.

The **third** is the Greek word *Tartaros* (tar-tar-os) appears once in scripture (NT), and it means: 1) the name of the subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds; it answers to Gehenna of the Jews.

The **fourth** is the Greek word *Gehenna* (gay-hay-ah), which is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew compound *ge* and *Hinnom* (Hebrew for 'valley of Hinnom').

The name Gehenna (in OT 'valley of Hinnom' or 'valley of the son of Hinnom') comes from a deep narrow ravine south of Jerusalem where many Hebrew parents, even *kings*, first sacrificed their children to the Ammonite gods, Molech (also referred to as Malcham, Milcom and Moloch) and Baal, during the time of the kings. Consider the scripture:

And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. – Lev. 18:21

Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. – 2Ki. 16:2-3

And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. – 2Ki. 17:16,17

*Interesting note - One section of the Valley of Hinnom was called Topheth (also spelled Tophet), where the children were slaughtered (2 Kings 23:10). Some linguistic scholars claim that the name Topheth is derived from the Hebrew word *toph* - which means 'a drum', because the cries of children being sacrificed by the priests of Moloch were masked by the sound of the beating on drums or tambourines. Others suggest the name Topheth may come from an Aramaic word meaning 'hearth,' 'fireplace,' or 'roaster.'

This same valley (Hinnom) later served as the city dump and, because there was continual burning of refuse there, it became a graphic symbol of the place of punishment for the wicked. It was named the 'Valley (*ge*) of Hinnom' or the 'Valley of the son of Hinnom' by the Hebrews (*ge-hinnom* – supposedly after its original owner), which in the Greek became '*Gehenna*' (not really a 'translation' – it's kinda like when we, in speaking English, use the Yiddish word 'glitch' or the German word 'kindergarten' rather than coming up with our own word for a thing). The passages where the word hell is translated from '*Gehenna*' in the New Testament plainly show that it was a commonly used expression for Hell by that time. The word is found twelve times in the Scriptures, being used eleven times by the Lord Jesus and once by James. When we consider the context, it is clear the Lord used this word to denote the place of everlasting punishment for the wicked dead and not to the city dump.

Gehenna, then, or 'the lake of fire,' or 'everlasting fire,' or 'eternal fire' might best be referred to as the future, or final, Hell, as it is where all the wicked from all ages will finally end up - although I believe no one currently resides there. I believe there is good scriptural evidence that the Antichrist beast and the second beast (False Prophet) will be the first two cast in, with Satan, his army of fallen angels and all the reprobate – from the first in the grave (Cain) to the last still living at that time – all eventually being cast in. Lord willing, we will get down into the details of *Gehenna* next week. But for today's work, suffice it to say that scriptural passages in which 'hell' is put for *Gehenna* should be distinguished from those in which 'hell' is put for *Hades* or *Sheol*, which refer (at least) to a place of temporary torment where the souls of the wicked go after physical death, that we might refer to as the immediate, or present, Hell. However, because *Hades* in the New Testament and *Sheol* in the Old are variously rendered 'hell' or 'grave,' there has been some misunderstanding about what hell and the grave are.

SHEOL/HADES: THE PRESENT 'HELL'

Hades is the Greek, or New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew, or Old Testament *Sheol*. The Greek and Hebrew words both speak of the same place, the present Hell. However, this is problematic, at least until we get more work done, because *Sheol* has been translated 'grave' as often as it has 'hell' and some have mistakenly taught that *Sheol* and *Hades* are only references to the grave itself rather than Hell. This erroneous teaching leads to the denial of the existence of an immediate or present Hell. In addition, false doctrines of soul-sleep, and other ideas that preach in error on the unconscious state of the dead between death and resurrection, spring from this error.

The common Old Testament (Hebrew) word for 'grave,' or the actual hole in the ground or cave into which a dead physical body is placed, is *queber* (kay-bear). Of the sixty-four times it is used, it is translated 'grave' thirty-four times, 'sepulcher' twenty-six times, and 'burying place' four

times. *Queber* is used five additional times as part of a place name, Kibroth-hattaavah, which means 'graves of lust.' As we said earlier, *Sheol* is found sixty-four times, being rendered 'grave' thirty-one times, 'hell' thirty-one times, and 'pit' three times.

When you compare how *Sheol* and *queber* are used in scripture, we can see several points of contrast that tell us that they are not the same thing:

1. *Sheol* is never used in plural form. *Queber* is used in the plural 29 times.
2. It is never said that the body goes to *Sheol*. *Queber* speaks of the body going there 37 times.
3. *Sheol* is never said to be located on the face of the earth. *Queber* is mentioned 32 times as being located on the earth.
4. An individual's *Sheol* is never mentioned. An individual's *queber* is mentioned 5 times.
5. Man is never said to put anyone into *Sheol* - individuals are put into a *queber* by man 33 times.
6. Man is never said to have dug or fashioned a *Sheol*. Man is said to have dug, or fashioned, a *queber* 6 times.
7. Man is never said to have touched *Sheol*. Man is said to touch, or be able to touch, a *queber* 5 times.
8. It is never said that man is able to possess a *Sheol*. Man is spoken of as being able to possess a *queber* 7 times.

Other words used in scripture that are associated with *queber* are *quabar* and *qeburah*. *Quabar* is a verb meaning to bury or to be buried and *qeburah* is a noun meaning a grave or place of burial. The use of these related words helps to reinforce the difference between *queber* and *Sheol*, as they all have to do with the grave as a burial place, while *Sheol* does not. From the differences between how *Sheol* and *queber* are used in Scripture, it seems clear that they are not the same thing. The Greek word *Hades* in the New Testament is used largely the same way as *Sheol* is used in the OT. In the New Testament we find three more words that refer to the grave, tomb or sepulcher: *taphos mnema*, and *mnemeion*. These words are always used to denote the physical container (whether grave, tomb, or sepulcher) of a dead physical body. The grave is a place where the physical remains of those who have died are deposited. It can be a hole in the ground, a cave, or a specially prepared vault or other place used for interment. The soul, having departed the body at death, leaves the flesh body without consciousness of life in the grave. The soul of man lives on after physical death and will always remain in a conscious state of being.

There are several examples in scripture to show that, even though *Sheol* is sometimes translated

as 'grave,' it doesn't mean the place of burial, but something else (and perhaps more than just a temporary place of torment, prior to *Gehenna*, but something else altogether).

After selling Joseph into slavery, his brothers stained his coat with blood and used it to convince their father that he had been killed by a wild animal (Gen. 37:26-36).

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, FOR I WILL GO DOWN INTO THE GRAVE (SHEOL) UNTO MY SON MOURNING. Thus his father wept for him. – Gen. 37:31-36

It seems clear that Jacob fully intended to eventually be reunited with his son in a tangible way. Obviously then, he did not simply have in mind the idea of joining him in burial as he believed that Joseph's body had not been buried at all but was eaten by an animal. It was thus impossible for Jacob to think he would join Joseph in burial. He looked forward to being reunited with him in the place of the departed dead, not in burial. The word rendered grave in this passage is *Sheol* - the abode of the souls of those who have died.

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people... And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days (70 days, but only 30 more days than the fulfilling of the embalming)... And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying... Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again... And his (Israel's) sons did unto him according as he commanded them: for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. – Gen. 49:33-50:13

After Jacob died, Joseph had his body mummified, a process that took forty days, then took him back to Canaan for burial (Gen. 50:1-14). When we add to that the thirty days of mourning (Gen. 50:2-4), and the time it took to travel to Canaan for the funeral (Gen. 50:5-13), we see that it

was several weeks after Jacob was *'gathered unto his people'* (Gen. 49:33) before his body was placed in the cave that served as his burial place. He had been dead for well over two months before his body was buried, but the Scriptures tell us that at the time he died, or *'yielded up the ghost,'* he was *'gathered to his people'* (Gen. 49:33). This shows that at the time of physical death, when *'he yielded up the ghost,'* his soul immediately departed his body to be with Isaac and Abraham. This cannot be a reference to his body being gathered together with their bodies, as that did not take place for over ten weeks. This is scriptural evidence that *Sheol* does not mean merely a burial place for the body, but is instead the place where the souls of the departed reside (and not just the wicked, as Jacob was and is the standing type in scripture for God's elect).

In the case of Samuel and Saul, we find another example of the Scriptures making a distinction between *Sheol/Hades* and the grave. In this mysterious conversation with King Saul, Samuel, whom the Lord had sent back from the dead to deliver a message to Saul, said that Saul and his sons would be with him the next day.

And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. – 1Sam. 28:15-19

As foretold, Saul and his sons did die the next day while in battle with the Philistines (see I Sam. 31:1-6). Their bodies were not buried the next day, so they did not join Samuel in the *grave* but their souls went down to *Sheol/Hades* where the person, or soul, of Samuel was. That Samuel (who had already passed away) *'came up'* (1Sam. 28:14) to speak to Saul makes it pretty clear, even inside of this mysterious conversation, that he went back down (to the place that he referred to as being *'with me'*) after speaking with Saul. As for the bodies of Saul and his sons, their remains were not buried for several days. As Samuel had foretold, they all died the following day (I Sam. 31:1-6). But it was the day after they died that their bodies were taken by the Philistines and hung on the wall of Beth-Shan (I Sam. 31:7-10). After hearing of this, valiant men from Jabesh-Gilead went by night and removed their bodies, took them to Jabesh, burned

them, and then buried their bones. All this took place at least three days after Saul and his sons had died, and probably longer. Saul and his sons joined Samuel in *Sheol/Hades* the day they died - and the flesh of their bodies was burned with only their bones being placed in a grave several days later. This gives us more evidence that *Sheol/Hades* and the literal 'grave' are not the same thing, nor are they in the same place.

Death and *Sheol/Hades* are linked together at least thirty-three times in the Scriptures. In these, we see a general distinction between the "outward man," which is the body and the "inward man," which is the soul (2Cor. 4:16). In this sense, death, or the grave, claims the physical part of man, the body, while *Sheol/Hades* claims the separated, spiritual part of man, the soul. This is expressed inside of the hope (and Messianic prophecy) of the psalmist:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (what happens when a dead, physical body is left in the grave). – Ps. 16:10

I believe that the Holy Spirit, through Peter, reiterated the prophetic pronouncement concerning the time between the Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross and His resurrection. First, he quoted Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28) and then made direct application of verse 10 to Christ (Acts 2:31).

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. – Acts 2:25-32

Not only was the Lord Jesus' soul not left in *Sheol/Hades*, but neither was His body left to rot in the grave. That Peter used the word *Hades* in the Acts restatement of Psalm 16 shows us that '*Sheol*' and '*Hades*' identical in meaning. The Lord Jesus Christ *only* had the power not only to lay down His life on our behalf, but also to take it up again:

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No

man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. – Jn. 10:17,18

This is not so of any other, as the Psalmist points out when he asks, rhetorically:

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave (Sheol – where the souls of men reside after physical death)? Selah. – Ps. 89:48

The Lord Jesus proclaimed:

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. -Mt. 12:40

The word 'heart' is used to denote the middle, or core, or inmost part of a thing (the heart of the matter, for example). When used figuratively in the Scriptures, the word 'heart' is used in a similar fashion, thus the heart of the earth gives reference to something much deeper than a simple place of burial for a man's body barely under the surface of the earth.

(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) – Eph. 4:9,10

I believe that Christ was saying that He would spend the time between His death and resurrection in *Sheol/Hades*. Many reject this thinking, in that they believe it would be wrong, or not holy, or somehow beneath Christ to make such a journey. I believe that such thinking imposes an artificial limitation on the Triune God. He bore our sins in His flesh. He bore the penalty for sin that no man can bear. The salvific blood of the Lamb negated, nay - completely obliterated, the power of death and hell (both *Sheol* and *Gehenna*) over His called-out body of believers. I believe the misguided theological position would be that God imposed some limitation on Himself in His creation of all things seen and unseen. Consider the scripture:

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. – Ps. 139:5-8

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. – De. 32:39,40

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. – Jn. 10:17,18

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. – Isa. 55:8,9

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. – Ro. 11:33-36

The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. – Pr. 16:4

I hope we can gather - from these and many other scriptural references - that *Sheol* (and therefore *Hades*, as the Greek equivalent), though rendered as 'grave' in English as often as 'hell,' has nothing to do with the physical grave, sepulcher, or state of burial, but is instead the realm where the souls of men have resided, after physical death, to await their ultimate, or eternal, estate (*Gehenna*). It seems equally clear that those in *Sheol/Hades* are not in an unconscious state of existence but are quite aware of what is going on around them. There is memory, recognition, and communication there (examples and further fleshing out of this concept to come). In what manner the souls of men, apart from their physical bodies, are able to see, think, speak and feel in *Sheol*, prior to eternal hell, or *Gehenna*, must still be addressed, with what force present light allows. The nature of *Sheol*, as to its seeming 'housing' of both the elect of God and the reprobate (as in the great gulf fixed between Lazarus and the rich man, at least prior to the death and resurrection of Christ), must also be treated, and is a topic for part two of this investigation. Finally, in light of scriptural references to each, the nature of the differences between *Sheol* and *Gehenna* (or eternal hell) will be spoken to next Sunday, Lord willing.

Thank you for your patience with me in the fleshing out of this terminology. My hope is that it will help keep us on track as we do a deeper dive into the topic.

I love you all.