

The Intermediate State of the Dead

by Maurice Barnett

What happens to a person at death? We know that the body without the spirit is dead, James 2:26; death is a separation of the spirit from the body. We also know what happens to the body. The body decays and returns to dust. But, what happens to the spirit, where does it go? Does the spirit go directly to heaven or hell, is there another place the spirit enters or is there a loss of consciousness while God just stacks all spirits somewhere to await the resurrection?



The answer to these questions has far reaching consequences. For one thing, it affects our image of Jesus. Where did he go when He died on the cross? Acts 2:27,31 say that His soul was not left unto Hades nor did His flesh see corruption. When Jesus went into Paradise the day he died, where did he go?

Of course, there are those, like the Jehovah's Witnesses who deny the existence of a distinct spirit in man; for them, man is wholly mortal. They are the modern day counterpart to the Sadducees who taught the same doctrine. Such a position produces several contradictions, especially in regard to the person of Jesus. For the JW's, man simply does not exist from death till the resurrection, except in the memory of God. I will not take the time or space in this chapter to specifically reply to this position. Enough material has already been presented to refute their contention. Seventh-day Adventism agrees with Jehovah's Witnesses on the nature of man. They express death in a "soul-sleep" terminology though that would imply the existence of a soul, an existence which they deny. Adventist Carlyle B. Haynes, in his book, *Life, Death and Immortality*, p. 202, says,

"The teaching of the Bible regarding the intermediate state of man is plain. Death is really and truly a sleep, a sleep that is deep, that is unconscious, that is unbroken until the awakening at the resurrection. In death man enters a state of sleep. The language of the Bible makes clear that it is the whole man which sleeps, not merely a part. No intimation is given that man sleeps only as to his body, and that he is wakeful and conscious as to his soul. All that comprises the man sleeps in death."

The position of the Adventists is actually soul-extinction. Another position, like and yet unlike the Adventists', is that of true soul sleep; the soul exists distinct from the body but loses consciousness at death. However, seeing that the soul exists apart from the body, that still doesn't answer the question: Where is the soul that is in this unconscious condition? Such a position misunderstands the word "sleep" in the scriptures. "Sleep," in regard to the dead, is used figuratively to refer to someone who is dead. The body of one who is dead appears to be asleep. That doesn't mean that the spirit is actually unconscious, though it certainly rests from this life's labors.

The Roman Catholic Church doctrine of Purgatory is probably quite well known to the public. Not only is there no scriptural support for such a doctrine, but the Bible specifically denies the basis of it. The account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 does not portray the Catholic purgatory. It does present the place of Hades, which is still not the place of eternal punishment. However, a great gulf exists between the two places so that one cannot go from one place to the other. There is no second chance. We shall see more evidence on the error of Purgatory in the following material.

There are two major views regarding what happens to the spirit at death. One is that there is an intermediate place called Hades that retains the spirits of mankind until the end.

Another is that the spirit goes directly to heaven or hell at death. Yet another position that's related to the "directly to heaven or hell" position is that the Hadean realm of departed spirits existed until the resurrection or ascension of Jesus. At whichever time one attaches it to, Jesus emptied Hades of the righteous and since that time all go directly to heaven. With some, it is not clear as to the condition of the wicked. One will say that all of Hades was emptied at the resurrection of Jesus, both the righteous and the wicked; the wicked go directly to Hell at death, just as the righteous go directly to heaven at death. Another will keep the Hadean realm in existence for only the wicked; the wicked will thus go into Hades at death, an intermediate state, until after judgment. Several reasons are given for this.

First, This emptying of Hades, or partial emptying, position appeals to Ephesians 4:8, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men." It is said that the "captivity" refers to the inhabitants of Hades; they were captive in Hades, Jesus released them and took them "captive" to heaven. However, that is only assumption and assertion.

When Jesus led captivity captive, He set men free from the bondage to sin and at the same time those set free became servants to Christ. In John 8:31ff, Jesus says that those who commit sin are the bondservants of sin. Romans 7:23 says,

"but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members."

This is captivity to sin that took place while Paul was alive, not in Hades. Jesus then says in John 8:36, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Just as men were in captivity to sin, so being set free from that captivity by Jesus, we become captive to Him. Romans 8:17-18 says that servants of sin who obey from the heart the doctrine delivered are then made free from sin to "become servants of righteousness." Notice especially II Corinthians 10:5, "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Those in captivity to sin are now captives of Jesus.

How is this accomplished? By the atonement of Jesus which was not completed until after His ascension into heaven, Hebrews 9:24-26, 11-14. Then, it was accomplished by the preaching of the gospel. Luke 4:18 says,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

All of this was accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel, based on the completion of His atonement after He ascended into heaven.

To further put these facts in proper order, look at the language of the passage. "When he ascended on high" is an *aorist participle*. It is to be understood just as the interlinear presents it, "having ascended up." That means that leading captivity captive and giving gifts to men both occurred at the same time; but, they did not take place until after His ascension into heaven. That places the freedom from captivity on Pentecost and not at the time of His resurrection or ascension. Jesus didn't lead anyone to heaven when He ascended. John 3:13 says that "no one hath ascended into heaven but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven." That was said by John at least 35 years after the ascension of Jesus.

Second, it is also said that since Jesus provided the atonement for sins, all those righteous ones who awaited from creation till the atonement, could at that time find their hopes fulfilled. Thus, there was no longer a need for an intermediate state for the righteous; that part of Hades was emptied at either the resurrection or ascension of Jesus. Since that time all of the righteous go directly to heaven at death. However, the wicked, not being forgiven of their sins, remain in Tartarus of Hades until the judgment when all the wicked will be cast into the

lake of fire. The other variation on the theme is that the wicked now go directly to Hell at death. My reply to this argument will be presented in detail in the pages to come.

Third, It is said that in Acts 7:55-59, Stephen looked into Heaven (not Paradise) and said at his death, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thus, Stephen, in the Spirit, expected to go to heaven to be with Jesus when he died. In reply, I point out that it is assumed that this is what Stephen thought. The question is, in what sense was he to be received. In Matthew 10:40, Jesus says, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." To receive the person and message of the disciples was to receive both Jesus and the Father. But, that did not mean actual physical presence. We receive Jesus into our hearts, but He dwells there by faith, not actual physical presence, Ephesians 3:17. When one enters the rest of Elysium in Hades, he is still being received by Jesus. Again, note the material that follows.

Fourth, it is said that the statements of Paul in Philippians 1:21-28 and II Corinthians 5:8, show that the righteous go directly to heaven at death. However, the significance of these passages will also be dealt with in the material that follows.

Though some may not realize it, both the direct to heaven or hell and the intermediate state of Hades are positions saying that there is an intermediate state for spirits between death and the resurrection. We can call that state by any name and it will still be a temporary place and temporary condition preceding the second coming of Jesus. Those who contend that man goes directly to either heaven or hell at death also have a "holding tank." If human spirits go directly to heaven or hell at death then they will be brought back to earth, out of heaven and hell, at the second coming of Jesus to rejoin their bodies in the resurrection. This will be followed by a judgment before Jesus the judge of all, at which time they will be sentenced to either heaven or hell. At that time, following judgment, there will be what the Bible speaks of as eternal life and eternal condemnation. Thus, if these departed human spirits are in either heaven or hell right now, they are still in an intermediate state between death and the resurrection. Our task, in this chapter, is to identify the intermediate state, just where it is, what the conditions are in that state and what we are to call it.

We are currently looking down the road toward eternity from the point of view of our lives here on earth. Let's start our investigation by going to the end of the road and working our way backward to see what steps or events await us along the way. Our starting place, therefore, will be the place and condition of eternal life and eternal condemnation, heaven and hell.

This is the goal we strive for, eternal life with God in heaven, the home of the righteous, Titus 1:2. It is the promise to all believers, John 3:14-16. In Hebrews 9:15, it is called receiving the promise of eternal inheritance, an inheritance that is promised for all the righteous of all ages. The word eternal refers to something without end. I Thessalonians 4:13ff describes the returning Lord, the resurrection of the righteous, the ascension of God's people to meet the Lord in the air. Verse 17 then tells us that "so shall we ever be with the Lord." Eternal life with the Lord in heaven means ever being with the Lord or being with Him for ever. That is an unending condition in a particular place.

Of course, the phrase "for ever" in some scriptures, may, in a sense, mean a limited time. It would thus mean for ever only within the boundaries of the subject being discussed at that moment. For instance, ordinances of the Law were given "for ever." In places "throughout your generations" is added, Leviticus 23:41, Numbers 18:23. It means that as long as Israel continued as a nation, those laws would be in force. But the Law was taken away, Israel as God's special nation ceased to exist, the temple and its sacrifices were destroyed, never to be rebuilt.

However, for ever also means unending without restriction as it does in referring to eternity. It certainly means this in regard to Jesus in Hebrews 13:8 when it says He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; it means eternal. John 6:51 and 58 say that if we eat the bread which came

down out of heaven, we shall live for ever; Jesus was the bread. Jesus says the same thing concerning water in John 4:14; whoever drinks the water He gives will have eternal life. The word eternal, in most place where it is found, means without end. So, eternal life, living for ever, ever being with the Lord, all declare the unending nature of our heavenly home. However, as we shall see, eternal life means much more than just existing eternally.

The place of eternal life is called heaven, from ouranos, a word that directs our attention to somewhere upward from the earth. The word heaven, in some passages, may refer to the sky area where the birds fly and clouds float. It may also refer to the celestial heavens where the stars shine. We understand it most commonly in regard to the dwelling place of God. Thus, the Bible indicates a first, second and a third heaven. Jesus came from heaven, John 3:31, and He went back to heaven "to appear before the face of God for us," Hebrews 9:24. That is the heaven of our eternal home.

I Peter 1:4-5 speaks of our having a living hope based on the resurrection of Jesus, granting unto us thereby "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Eternal life involves an incorruptible inheritance and a salvation that is more than just salvation from past sins. Notice, also, that the incorruptible inheritance and salvation are reserved till "the last time." That "last time" will be the time of the Lord's second coming, the end. Eternal life in heaven is an inheritance that cannot be corrupted or defiled; nor can we ever lose it; it never fades and those who have it will never experience any ruin or loss of well being (perish).

We have eternal life now in the sense that we have Christ now and continue faithfully to follow Him. The promise is that certain. I John 5:11-12 says, "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." But, the actual entrance into eternal life, heaven itself, is what is promised to us for the future, a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, one reserved for us in heaven.

The place of Heaven is not an eternal home for disembodied human spirits. The Sadducees denied the existence of a spirit in man and a resurrection from the dead. In Matthew 22:23-33, Jesus shows them from scripture that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all still alive though obviously they were physically dead. Their spirits were still alive, though the bodies had decayed. The continuing existence of their spirits proved that there would be a resurrection from the dead. Spirits are reunited with bodies to produce a resurrection.

There assuredly will be a resurrection in the future. Paul answered the erroneous position that there will be no resurrection, in I Corinthians 15. He warns Timothy of another error, led by Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had erred from the truth, fallen from the faith, teaching that the resurrection was already past. What we believe about the resurrection is important; we are not allowed to believe just anything we want to believe. Seeing it is vital to get our facts straight in regard to the resurrection, would it be any less important to get our facts straight about the nature of that resurrection, the second coming of Jesus, judgment and eternal rewards?

The word resurrection means a raising up of what has fallen. What has fallen is the body and it must be raised up. Jesus' friend Lazarus was resurrected from the dead when he was called forth from the tomb by Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus was the reanimation of His body. When Jesus first appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, they were afraid, supposing they beheld a spirit. Jesus replied,

"See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having," Luke 24:36-43.

He then ate a piece of fish to further prove that He was raised from the dead. Thomas had to feel the prints in His hands and the wound in His side to finally believe. Following the crucifixion,

“many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many,” Matthew 27:52-53.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, for Abraham to send Lazarus back to the rich man’s house would have involved a resurrection from the dead, vs. 31.

Paul said in I Corinthians 15, that flesh and blood would not inherit the kingdom of God, that this mortal must put on immortality, that this corruptible must put on incorruption. That which is mortal is subject to death. That which is corruptible is subject to decay. This body may be sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but raised in power. It is sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body. The body of the resurrection will be immortal and incorruptible, a glorious and powerful spiritual body, a fit tabernacle for our spirits in eternal life. The flesh and blood of which Paul speaks is this body we have now but it is a body that will be changed. Our resurrected and glorified bodies will be the spiritual tabernacles in which our spirits will dwell for eternity in heaven. I Corinthians 15:51-53 says,

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

The last trump will sound at the second coming of Jesus. Those who are dead will be raised and with the living righteous, be changed. Notice that it is the body that will be changed and not the spirit. For the dead, it will be the reuniting of the spirit with the body. These are the same facts Paul reveals in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Our bodies will be changed to look like the body of Jesus of Nazareth that was changed when He ascended. Peter said in Acts 2:36 that the same Jesus who was crucified has now been made Lord and Christ. That involved both spirit and body. John tells us in I John 3:2,

“Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.”

Our bodies will be fashioned to be like His present body, though we have no idea about either the looks or composition of that body. Philippians 3:20-21,

“For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.”

God is able to perform this. Jesus said to the Sadducees that they erred not knowing the scriptures “nor the power of God.” Luke’s account of this confrontation with the Sadducees, Luke 20:34-36, says,

“And Jesus said unto them, The sons of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: for neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

The word “attain” means to “reach.” Evidently, that new world is heaven. Reaching that new, next, world is connected here with the resurrection from the dead, never dying again, being equal to angels, and being sons of God. These are all events taking place at the time of the end, and not until the time of the end. Paul told the Romans that

“ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” Romans 8:23.

Our bodies will be redeemed and changed to a glorious body. II Corinthians 5:1 says,

“For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.”

The order of events is clearly established. There must first be a resurrection, a judgment day, and then final sentencing, heaven for the righteous. This is the order in Revelation 20:11-14, 21:1-9. Revelation 20:13 says,

"And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

Chapter 21 begins with the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth, with New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. God will wipe away all tears

"and death will be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away ... I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

Notice the order, resurrection, judgment day, heaven or hell. Keep in mind the descriptions we have just read of the nature of the resurrection. Such descriptions give us a clue to what it means to have eternal life. We emphasize, eternal existence is not the same as eternal life. The wicked will have eternal existence, but of the worst kind.

The day of judgment refers to a day of sentencing, Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus will come in His glory, along with the angels, and sit on the throne of His glory. All mankind will be gathered before Him and He will separate them like separating sheep from goats, sheep on the right hand and goats on the left. The King says of the righteous, verse 34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is the eternal kingdom, eternal salvation in heaven, II Peter 1:11. Verse 46 then says, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 12:41 says,

"The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold a greater than Jonah is here."

Hundreds of years may separate generations of humanity, but they will all meet at the same time on that great day of judgment. This is true for those worthy ones from the Old Testament period as well as the living worthies at the time of the second coming. The wicked of all ages will likewise be there with the righteous.

However, a resurrection and the special day of judgment must occur before this entrance into eternal life. John 5:28-29 says,

"Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."

All mankind will be raised at that one time and sentenced to either heaven or hell. But, they will not go to either place until they are sentenced at the last day.

Paul tells the Athenians that all men everywhere are commanded to repent, "inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts 17:31. He also told the Corinthians, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ: that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad," II Corinthians 5:10. So also, says Romans 14:10.

Matthew 12:36 warns that every idle word that men speak will face them "in the day of judgment." There is no doubt that a universal day of judgment is taught in the scriptures, a day

that will see all mankind gathered before the Lord and they will be given their final sentencing. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23,

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

This is a scene at judgment, and many will argue with the judge in that day. This is like the questions asked at judgment by both the righteous and the wicked in Matthew 25:31-46. Yet, their fate was already sealed. Actually, one's fate is settled at death. God already knows who are the righteous and who are the wicked. That's why He could separate the sheep from the goats at the very start.

The wicked experience the same order of events as the righteous, but with some notable differences. The promises of blessings that accompany eternal life do not apply to the wicked. The wicked undergo eternal condemnation, eternal torment, eternal fire. The phrases “depart from me” and “these shall go away,” tell us of the eternal separation from God, the second death, that the wicked will experience. II Thessalonians 1:9 says that they will suffer “punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” All of the wicked of humanity, the powerful as well as the weak, the great and the small of all ages, the dignified unbelievers and even some morally upstanding, religious people who worshipped the wrong God, along with apostates from the Faith, will be combined with the worst scum of humanity who have ever lived.

The word *gehenna* comes from the Hebrew meaning “Valley of Hinnom,” originally a pleasant place. In its literal meaning, it referred to a valley running along the south side of Jerusalem. It was also known in the Old Testament as Tophet. God prophesied what Tophet would become. Isaiah 30:33 says,

“For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”

To this add the words of Jeremiah,

“And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. Therefore, behold, the days come saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away,” Jeremiah 7:31-33.

Other passages in Jeremiah say much the same. This corrupt and obnoxious end to the Valley of Hinnom was according to God's intent, prophesied to happen. The prophesies were fulfilled.

The Canaanites sacrificed to heathen idols there and even Israel joined with them at times. Good King Josiah burned a pig on the altar of Molech, threw the bones around the valley and thus made it unfit for religious sacrifices. From that time on, it became the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem. At times, the bodies of criminals were dumped there and perhaps others who had no place of burial. In order to keep down the huge amount of refuse as much as possible, fires were kept burning there to consume it. Animals came from all around to feed on the food wastes; worms also fed there constantly. God planned this conclusion for the Valley of Hinnom and by that produced as close to a physical image of terror, repugnance and horror of eternal punishment as could be given. From this image of the Valley of Hinnom comes the description in the New Testament of a place where their worm dieth not, the fire is not

quenched, the smoke of their torment ascends upward for ever and ever and they have rest neither day nor night. Thus, Gehenna stands for eternal condemnation and is appropriately translated and understood in our modern usage of the term as Hell.

The wicked, like the righteous, continue to consciously exist for eternity. But, again, existing for eternity is not the same as the eternal life of the righteous. With both, there must be a resurrection of the body, but only the righteous are promised a glorious and powerful change in that body. The wicked are to be raised, sentenced and sent to Hell with a body that will not die or decay, but otherwise they have no promise of any change in that body from what it is now. Jesus said,

“And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

The word *destroy*, from *apollumi*, does not mean annihilation but ruin or loss of well being. It is used to refer to the ruin of wine skins, Luke 5:37, or lost sheep, Luke 15:4, or the lost son, Luke 15:24. The latter two were not even dead but certainly had a loss of well being. In Hebrews 10:39, the same word is translated “perdition.” It says, “we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them have faith unto the saving of the soul.” The righteous will have a great increase of “well being,” but the wicked will be in ruin, have a loss of well being.

In the same vein, Hebrews 10:26-29 warns apostates that by sinning willfully they can expect “a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.” He further says that those who transgressed the Law of Moses were put to death, but apostates can expect a “sorer punishment” than physical death. That worse punishment than physical death is the fierceness of fire that characterizes Hell.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that it was better for one of our bodily members to perish and “not the whole body be cast into hell,” Matthew 5:29-30. He says the same thing in Matthew 18:9, but describes the end as “the hell of fire.” When Matthew 3:12 refers to this as “unquenchable” fire, the Greek word *asbestos* is used. It has been transliterated into English to refer to something that cannot be destroyed by fire. In Greek, it means that which cannot be extinguished. That, is the hell of fire. In Matthew 26:24, Jesus reveals the final lot of Judas when He said, it would have been “good for that man if he had not been born.” There is punishment worse than death.

Revelation 14:11 says that “the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night.” This is contrasted with the righteous who are portrayed as being at rest. The reality and promise of this rest for the righteous is seen in Hebrews 4:1-11, whereas Hebrews 3:18 says that those who are disobedient will not enter into God’s rest; they will go to Hell where there is no rest day or night for eternity.

The place of this eternal punishment, though described as having the pain of everlasting fire, is also said to be a place of utter darkness. In Matthew 25:30, Jesus says, “And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” II Peter 2:17 and Jude 13 both describe it as the place where “the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.” In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth from the pain and frustration.

Before there can be a resurrection of all mankind, there must be the event that triggers the resurrection and the Judgment of that great day, the second coming of Jesus.

II Timothy 4:1 says, “I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.” The word *charge* means to bear a solemn witness, to testify thoroughly. There is a day coming for these events.

John 5:28-29 affirms from the Lord that there is an hour coming when all who have died will come forth from their graves. This coming forth from the tombs is referred to as a resurrection,

some to a resurrection of life and others to a resurrection of condemnation. This implies a judgment following the resurrection and before the eternal destination of the righteous and the wicked. Concerning His second coming, Jesus said that we are always to be ready, "for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." A particular hour is ascribed to all events.

The time of His coming is referred to by both the words day and hour. This is not a lengthy period of time but an event that marches quickly through the second coming, resurrection and judgment. In Matthew 24:36, answering the question about the signs of His coming and the end of the world, Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one." Verse 42 says, "Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh." He then adds in verse 44, "Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." Day and hour refer to the same time. This is the same hour in which the graves will be opened and all the dead will be resurrected. II Thessalonians 1:7-9 says,

"and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day."

"In that day" is the day of His second coming when judgment will be handed out to all men.

John 6:39 says, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." In verse 40 He speaks of the faithful, "I will raise him up at the last day." He says the same thing in verse 44 and 54. In John 11:24, Martha says that she knows that Lazarus will rise again "in the resurrection at the last day." John 12:48 says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." In the last day and at the last day mean the same thing.

The second coming of Jesus will be "at the last day," the resurrection will be "at the last day," judgment will be "at the last day" and entrance into our eternal reward, heaven or hell, will be "at the last day." I Corinthians 15:23-26 calls this "the end." Notice,

"But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death."

Second coming, resurrection, judgment, eternal reward in that order, at the last day, the end.

From the creation of man to the atonement of Jesus, untold numbers of humans died. Death, which means separation, is the separation of the spirit of a man from his body. Genesis 35:18 says of Rachel "as her soul was in departing, (for she died)." I Kings 17:21 says of Elijah that he stretched himself on a widow's son who was dead and prayed that his soul would come into him again, which it did. The daughter of Jairus, ruler of the synagogue, was raised by Jesus in Luke 8:53-55. It says that "her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately." Her spirit came from somewhere, entered her dead body, brought it back to life and she "rose." If her spirit was in heaven then Jesus brought her spirit back out of heaven to rejoin her body. James 2:26 says that the body without the spirit is dead. As death is a separation of the spirit from the body, a return of the spirit to the body is a resurrection. But, in the Old Testament period, where did the spirits go at death?

Wherever the spirits went at death, they still existed and were conscious. Jesus told the Sadducees in Luke 20:27-40 that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him. The argument of Jesus is that God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though these three had been long dead, physically. The present tense verb shows that at the

time of His meeting with Moses at the burning bush, He was still the God of these three. Yet, God is not the God of the dead, but the living. These three still lived, somewhere, which proved the existence of a spirit and a resurrection from the dead.

King Saul went to the witch at Endor to see if she could put him in contact with Samuel. Contact was made, but it was not by the power of the woman. God brought Samuel before Saul to give him a message. An old man in appearance, covered with a mantle ascended out of the earth and asked Saul, "why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" It was not his physical body, not a resurrection; Samuel was not buried in the house of this witch in Endor. The spirit of Samuel appeared in a form recognizable as human. He came from some place. Notice that Samuel did not come down out of heaven, but up from out of the earth.

Moses and Elijah appeared with the transfigured Jesus and talked with Him, Matthew 17:1-8. This was not a resurrection, though they did appear in some human form that the apostles understood to be Moses and Elijah. The ancients disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. The spirits were alive, conscious, could communicate and they came from some place to appear with Jesus.

Luke 16:19-31 gives us a glimpse of this place of departed spirits. Of course, there is some figurative language in this account. For instance, the fire and torment is of a different sort from what we would experience in the flesh; this is a spirit experiencing torment, but a spirit portrayed in the image of a human body. Both the poor man Lazarus and the rich man died and we see the place and condition of their spirits. Lazarus was in a place of rest and the rich man in a place of torment. The rich man wanted Lazarus first to relieve his suffering with a drop of water and when that was not possible, be resurrected so he could return to the home of the rich man and warn his five brethren. There was a gulf between the place of rest and that of torment so none could cross from one place to the other and there was no second chance. All of this took place during the Mosaic dispensation with Jews playing the parts in this scene; Abraham tells the rich man that his brothers back in earthly life have Moses and the prophets to whom they must listen. We know that Jesus would not tell a lie in teaching the truth, so the basic facts concerning such a place as portrayed here are truly given.

We must conclude that this is an intermediate place and condition between death and something that would happen in the future. A major reason that such a state had to exist during the Old Testament period is because the redemptive price for man's sins was not paid yet. Hebrews 9:15 says,

"And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Under the Law of Moses, a person could become unclean regarding temple ceremonies and sacrifices by several offenses, such as touching a dead body. One had to go through a process of cleansing that would result in a "forgiveness of sins," meaning restoring one to full social and ceremonial acceptance. Hebrews 9:13 says,

"For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Blood and ashes of animals could sanctify to the cleanness of the flesh those who had been ceremonially defiled. But, the blood of Christ was for a greater cleansing. Hebrews 9:22-23 says,

"And according to the law, I may say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Hebrews 9 and 10 discuss what the priests under the law did on the day of Atonement for sin: they had to repeat the same sacrifice every year. Contrasted with that yearly sacrifice was the single sacrifice that Jesus made for all time for the sins of mankind. The difference between the two time periods was that none of the sacrifices under the law could bring actual remission of sins; only Jesus could do that. Hebrews 10:4 says it clearly, "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

Romans 4:17 says that God "calloeth the things that are not, as though they were." God could pronounce forgiveness of sins for some in the Old Testament because it was certain that the price would be paid for those sins. Yet, the actual forgiveness could not take place until the price was finally paid. Even the most faithful person under the Old Testament could not go directly to heaven at death because he still had sin charged against him and had to wait for the atonement of Jesus so that his sins could actually be forgiven. Hebrews 11:13 says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar." Verse 39 says, "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise." What they were looking for was a city whose builder and maker is God, a city God has prepared for them, but they died in faith with that in view but not receiving it when they died.

Some dissenters insist that the dead went to heaven or hell during the Old Testament period. They base that on a couple of references.

First, it is said that Enoch went to Heaven because Hebrews 11:5 says that Enoch was translated that he should not see death. However, this passage only says that Enoch did not die as other people die; we are not told how this was done. The passage says nothing in any way about where Enoch went.

Second, Elijah went directly to heaven because II Kings 3:9-13 says he ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. However, the word heaven in this instance does not refer to the heaven where God dwells but to what the Jews understood as the first heaven, the atmosphere where clouds are and birds fly. This account only refers to Elijah's being taken upward in a whirlwind from the point of view of Elisha who was standing on the ground watching him go.

We must conclude that there was an intermediate state of the spirit following death in the Old Testament period. Not only that, there had to be such a place, if for no other reason than the fact that the price for salvation was not paid until the atonement of Jesus; that was not the only reason for such a state, however.

John 3:13 says, "And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." This is not figurative or symbolic language, but literal. John 3:13 was not a part of the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus; that conversation ended at verse 12. Notice also that the narrative is shifted from first person to the third person from verse 13 through the rest of the chapter; that includes all of verse 13. The final phrase in that verse, "even the Son of man, who is in heaven," uses the present tense that shows the inspired John as the author of the passage at least thirty-five years after the beginning of the Gospel dispensation. If Jesus were speaking this to Nicodemus, He was saying something that was untrue. He could not be standing there talking to Nicodemus and still be "the Son of man, who is in heaven" because He was not in heaven at the time and no "dual occupation" can explain that statement. Some deny that this last phrase is authentic because it does not appear in some manuscripts. However, it does appear in others and there is enough evidence to firmly conclude that it belongs in the Bible as it is above. Others have insisted that it only refers to a sense in which Jesus was in heaven and on earth at the same time. But, the construction, tenses of the verbs and language will not allow such an imaginative and forced interpretation. So, at least thirty five years after the crucifixion, no one had ascended into heaven to that time; Jesus was the only one. Where, then, were the souls of the dead?

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His apostles, “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also,” John 14:2-3. Though some would like for this to refer to the church, neither the language of these verses nor the specific explanation by Jesus of what He said, will allow that application. Jesus is telling them He is going to heaven after His work on earth is finished. In verse 28, He says, “Ye heard how I said unto you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father.” This verse refers specifically to verses 2-3. Jesus thus explains what He meant about going away and exactly where He was going. The disciples had long before been told, many times, that the Father is in Heaven. Since Jesus said that He was going to be with the Father, it necessarily meant He was going to Heaven. Deuteronomy 26:15 says concerning God, “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel.”

When Jesus says, “where I am ye may be also,” He is promising the disciples that they will be with Him in Heaven. However, before His disciples can be with Him in heaven, Jesus must prepare a place for them there and then come back and get them. He promises the apostles that He will “come again.” This is a reference to His second coming. His “coming again” in these passages does not refer to His resurrection from the dead because Jesus did not go to heaven at the moment He died, as we shall see shortly. Nor did Jesus take the Apostles with Him when He ascended into heaven following His resurrection. He went to the Father in heaven to prepare a place for them, from whence He would return to receive them unto Himself that they could be in heaven with Him. However, seeing that He has not returned, this promise has not yet been fulfilled. This means that the apostles are not yet where Jesus is in heaven with the Father.

Nor does this statement mean that Jesus would return for their bodies alone, so that their bodies could be changed and go into the realm of heaven. He addresses His remarks to the disciples, “you.” That included the spirit and the body of each disciple. When in verse 28, He says, “Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father,” the “you” refers to the persons who were the disciples. Jesus was the only one who was going to the Father and He had to return to get them so they could be with Him.

II Corinthians 5:1-10 gives an order of events we have already seen in previous pages: this present body, the resurrection, a new body for the righteous, a judgment day and then our eternal abode. Verse 1 calls the present physical body “the earthly house of our tabernacle” and death was the dissolving of this earthly tabernacle. Peter also refers to this current physical body as “this tabernacle” and says that the putting off his tabernacle is “my decease,” death, II Peter 1:13-15.

In II Corinthians 5:4, Paul further refers to this present physical tabernacle as being “mortal.” In I Corinthians 15, he also says that this body of flesh and blood we now have is mortal and corruptible. This mortal must put on immortality and this corruptible must put on incorruption because this flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The present body will be raised and then changed into a new body, a spiritual body that cannot die nor decay. God will make that change by His power. The new body will be a tabernacle for the spirit that is especially fitted for eternal life in heaven. The new body will look like the glorified spirit body of Jesus of Nazareth as it is right now in heaven, I John 3:2. I John 2:28 says, “abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Comparing the two passages in I John, the time Jesus is manifested is at His second coming. We will not know what we will look like until we see Jesus at His second coming. If the righteous go directly to heaven at the moment they die, John should have said that we don’t

presently know what we shall be like, but at the moment we die we shall know because we will then be with Him and will see Him as He is. But, that isn't what John said!

II Corinthians 5:1 tells us that this new body will be eternal in the heavens. The new body that God provides will be according to a pattern He has devised, just as He had a pattern for our present spirit and body. Obviously, the human spirit was not intended by God to exist eternally without a tabernacle of some sort in which to dwell. In I Corinthians 15:47-48, Paul says,

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

So, it is reasonable that Paul would say in II Corinthians 5:2 that we groan, "longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven." The spirit is clothed upon with a new body so that "what is mortal may be swallowed up of life." In the phrase, "what is mortal may be swallowed up of life," the "life" is eternal life that will characterize the immortal and incorruptible new body, the tabernacle of the spirit.

Romans 8:21-23 speaks of our "being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." This deliverance is then said to be "the redemption of our body." Romans 8:23 says,

"And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Whatever is involved in our adoption, it is something tied to the redemption of our body, the resurrection from the dead and that we must wait for it until the end!

It is at the end that our present bodies are raised and changed, Philippians 3:20-21. This body of our humiliation will not be fashioned anew until the resurrection. "Whence we wait for a Saviour" shows that the righteous are located somewhere, waiting for this Saviour to come from heaven to accomplish this, just as I John 3:2 speaks of the time when Jesus will be manifested and we shall then see Him as He is.

II Corinthians 5:6-8 says that being at home in the body means we are absent from the Lord and we "are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." Some insist that this means we are going to be with the Lord at the exact time we become absent from the body; at death our spirits will go directly to heaven to be with Him. No, I don't believe so, for several reasons.

First, the apostles will not actually be with the Lord until He comes again to receive them unto Himself, John 14; that will happen at His second coming when all the dead will be raised.

Second, the time when we will receive the eternal blessings follows a resurrection from the dead; the clothing upon from heaven occurs then. The fashioning anew of the body of our humiliation happens then. It is the time when this mortal will be swallowed up of life, II Corinthians 5:1-4.

Third, we must stand before Jesus at judgment before receiving our reward according to what we have done in this body, II Corinthians 5:10. There must be His second coming, a resurrection, judgment and then our eternal reward.

Fourth, let's understand how God words things in the Scriptures. There is a sense in which we will be with the Lord at death, but will not actually, literally, be with Him. We can illustrate that with the subject of eternal life. We have already seen that there is a sense in which we have eternal life right now, I John 5:13, John 5:24. However, the meaning of eternal life as the entrance into heaven, does not take place until after judgment, Matthew 25:46. In that sense, that of Matthew 25:46, we do not have eternal life as yet. Romans 2:7-9 says,

"to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness,

shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish.”

This shows both eternal life and eternal punishment. Both are yet to come. Note that the eternal life in Romans 2 occurs at the same time as glory, honor and incorruption. But, incorruption refers to the resurrection body. Romans 6:22 says that the servant of God will have in “the end eternal life.” Titus 1:2 and 3:7 refer to it as “the hope of eternal life.” But, we don’t hope for something we have already, Romans 8:24-25. So, there is a sense in which we have eternal life right now. But, we will not actually have eternal life until after judgment.

We have already noticed that there are things in scripture that are spoken of in the present tense but are not actually existent as yet. The reason this is so is given to us by inspiration. Isaiah 46:9-11 says,

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

God can call the end from the beginning, stating it as a declared fact in present time. The most definitive statement of this is Romans 4:17, “who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were.” A thing can be so definite and certain to happen that it can be spoken of in present time, stating the end at the beginning, calling the things that have not happened as though they had.

This is why Paul, in II Corinthians 5:6-9 could speak of being absent from the body and at home with the Lord. It was absolutely certain, based on the promises of God, that the faithful will be with the Lord in eternity, Revelation 2:10. The same can be said concerning Philippians 1:21-26 where Paul expresses his desire to depart and be with Christ. There, Paul is only expressing his desire; that is what he would like. That is not to say that at the moment of death he would be with the Lord in heaven. Yet it was so certain and sure that he would be with Him that it could be expressed in the present tense. In Philippians 3:11, after saying that he had suffered the loss of all things for Christ, he says, “if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.” It would be at the second coming of Jesus, resurrection and judgment that Paul and all the righteous would have their hopes realized and the promises of God would be fulfilled. Paul and the Philippians would have to wait for Jesus to return for that to happen, Philippians 3:20-21, “whence also we wait for a saviour.”

In II Corinthians 5:1-10, the section opens by discussing the new tabernacle we will receive at the time of the resurrection from the dead. That is discussed in verses 1-4. The section closes with the scene of judgment in verse 10. We will receive then according to what we have done in the body, whether good or bad. That being the case, verses 6-9 must be taken in the same time frame as the beginning and end of the subject discussed and that is the second coming, resurrection, judgment and reward.

Let’s take another look at some of the passages we have already seen and add some others. These passages speak of what is reserved for both the good and the evil in eternity. I Peter 1:4-5,

“unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that never ends, the salvation that has been reserved in heaven for us, won’t be revealed until the last time! We don’t receive the inheritance/salvation that this passage speaks of at the moment we die.

II Peter 2:17 says, “These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.” Whatever the condition of the wicked immediately after death, it is not the same blackness of darkness that has been reserved for

them. Notice that it is a “for ever” condition that has been reserved for them. The time of this fulfillment is given in II Peter 3:7,

“but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

II Peter 3:12 adds,

“looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

This occurs at the end of the world, the time of judgment and the eternal reward. But, what goes on during the time between death and the day of judgment? Well, the wicked are not comfortable. II Peter 2:9 says,

“the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.”

The unrighteous will be under punishment until the day of judgment arrives but it won't be as severe a punishment as after judgment.

I Thessalonians 5:23 says, “and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Whatever condition the spirits of the righteous enter into at death, it's not the one spoken of here; this one will not occur until the second coming of Jesus.

Colossians 3:4 says, “When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.” This is clearly a “when/then” construction. Christ's being manifested refers to His second coming. It is when He comes again that then Christians will be manifested with Him in glory. We will not be manifested with Him in glory until He comes again. This same fact is stated also in Hebrews 9:28, “so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.” This speaks of the second coming of Christ and a salvation that is yet future, eternal life. It is for those who “wait for him” unto salvation. All the righteous are still waiting for Him and for the salvation we will have then.

The crown of life, crown of righteousness, eternal life, salvation, new habitation, inheritance, adoption, reward, new body, city of God, immortality, incorruption, never die, eternal kingdom, redemption, liberty of the glory of the children of God along with other words and phrases, tell us of our expected future as the people of God. But, none of these things will be a reality until after the second coming, resurrection and judgment, all of which is yet future! Whatever is the nature of the rest that the righteous enjoy at death now, it is still not the same as what these words and phrases claim for the future!

This also is true for the wicked. Eternal condemnation, eternal destruction, eternal torment, eternal death, loss of well being, no rest day or night, second death, lake of fire and brimstone, smoke of their torment, blackness of darkness, weeping and wailing, gnashing of teeth and other words and phrases describe the lot of the wicked. But, none of these things will be a reality until after the second coming, resurrection and judgment, all of which is yet future! Whatever is the nature of the unrest and punishment the wicked enter at death now, it is still not the same as what is assured the wicked following judgment.

This only emphasizes again that an intermediate state of some sort exists between death and the resurrection. The question left is: Where is that intermediate state; what is it called?

The Greek word *hades* was originally a name for the God of the underworld, Pluto. Thayer, p. 11 says of it,

“the nether world, the realm of the dead ... it denotes, therefore, in bibl. Grk. Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark (Job x.21) and dismal place ... in the very depths of the earth ... the common receptacle of disembodied spirits ...”

Bauer, p. 16 says it is “the underworld as the place of the dead ... In the depths, contrasted w. heaven.” Cremer adds to this, p. 69,

"As Hades is for all a joyless place, but a place of torture especially for the godless, it is natural to perceive that the dwelling-place of the righteous departed, though they also are received into the one great abode of the dead, is separated from that of the wicked. In this place they await the end hinted at in Ps xlix. 15,16, which is brought about by the accomplishment of redemption."

Edward Robinson, p. 12, says,

"The Hebrew Sheol signified in like manner the under world, and was held to be a vast subterranean place, full of thickest darkness, where dwelt the shades of the dead; but no distinction of place is indicated in the Sheol of the O.T. between the righteous and the wicked. For Hebrew, the LXX have almost every- where put hades; and in accordance with this usage, the idea of Sheol is found among the later Jews more developed and assimilated to the Greek Hades. The souls of the righteous and the wicked were held to be separated; the former inhabiting the region of the blessed, the inferior Paradise (Luke 23,43) or Eden of the Rabbins; while lower down was the abyss called Gehenna or Tartarus, in which the souls of the wicked are in torment."

So say other authorities. Hades was the place of departed spirits of men, both the good and the evil. The bodies of men did not go there. The ancient Greeks considered Hades to be divided into two realms, Elysian Fields, a place of rest and comfort for the spirits of good people, and Tartarus, the place of torment for departed wicked people.

Even the Hebrew, Sheol, though translated by grave or pit in some places in the KJV, with a minor exception, refers to the invisible place of the dead. Sheol never means a grave or tomb in the ground. There are other Hebrew words for grave and tomb, meaning a place in the ground. The only way it can refer to a grave is to strip it to its most barren meaning as simply an unseen place, a place not seen by human eyes.

There is one place where Sheol may refer to just an unseen place but has nothing to do with a tomb or some place after death. Jonah 2:2 says, "Out of the belly of sheol cried I." Jonah was not even dead at the time, and was not in a tomb or grave. He was in a place not seen by human eyes, in the belly of the great fish.

Sheol may refer to the region of the dead, but not a tomb in the ground. Genesis 37:35 says, ". . . For I will go down to sheol to my son mourning ..." Though Jacob spoke of going to his son to Sheol, he thought Joseph was eaten by a wild animal. Hence, Joseph was not in a tomb, yet was in Sheol. Here it means the underworld of the dead.

Sheol may refer to the place of the soul distinct from the body. Psalm 16:10 says, "For thou wilt not leave my soul to sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." The soul was in sheol, the body in the tomb, or grave. Consequently, sheol could not refer to the grave because a clear distinction is drawn here.

Sheol may refer to a place of conscious existence. Ezekiel 32:21 says, "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of sheol with them that help him ..."

Sheol may refer to some condition of punishment. Proverbs 23:13-14 says, "Withold not correction from the child; for if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from sheol." There is no way one could keep one's child from death and the tomb, but here one can keep him from sheol. By discipline, a child can grow to be righteous, and hence escape the punishment of sheol. The Greek counterpart to sheol is hades.

The Textus Receptus, the basic Greek text for the King James Translation, places hades in I Corinthians 15:55 and so the KJV translates it by the word grave, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" Later Greek texts have the word *thanatos*, death, in the place of hades. The two questions in this passage are based on Hosea 13:14 where the word sheol is used. I believe the Textus Receptus is correct in using hades in the passage, though the KJV translation of grave does not adequately express the meaning of the passage. The two questions, death where is thy sting? and hades where is thy victory? can only be answered as nowhere!

Death and Hades are not the same thing. Death and Hades go together as we see in Revelation 1:18, "I have the keys of death and of Hades;" Revelation 6:8, "and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him;" Revelation 20:13, "and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them;" Revelation 20:14, "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire."

There is no victory in either death or Hades; they both are the enemies of victory. The only victory we have is in the resurrection from the dead, as I Corinthians 15 argues. Death and Hades will come to an end at the second coming of Jesus and cast into the lake of fire. Both death and Hades are temporary.

Except for I Corinthians 15:55, the KJV uniformly translates Hades as Hell, which was an acceptable translation three hundred years ago. The word Hell is derived from the Saxon hillan or helan, meaning to hide. The word Hell meant an unseen place in 17th century England. An archaic usage, a residue of our English past, is expressed even today when some older New England farmers speak of such things as "helling" their potatoes. They aren't talking about French Fries, but of putting their potatoes underground for the winter, putting them in an unseen place. Or, a receptacle into which a tailor throws his pieces is called a hellbox. Generally, our English word Hell has changed its meaning and now is the place of eternal torment for the wicked.

In the New Testament Hades, we are looking at a particular place, unseen by people still alive on this earth, but a place of departed spirits both good and evil. This is the meaning of Hades as it appears in the New Testament.

And, Hades still exists. We have already seen that in I Corinthians 15:55. We have also seen it in such passages as Revelation 20:13-15, which says,

"And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

These passages tell us of the general resurrection of all mankind, a rejoining of the spirits with the bodies, a judgment and a sentencing to eternal conditions. The lake of fire is gehenna, "hell." Not until the judgment will death and Hades end. Notice also that Hades and the second death (Hell) are not the same thing. The torment of Hell begins at the time death and Hades are cast into it. But, notice Revelation 1:17-18 especially,

"Fear not: I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

This is Jesus speaking. He still had the keys of death and Hades when this was said through John. As long as death exists, Hades will likewise. I Corinthians 15:24-26 says that Jesus must reign until the last enemy is destroyed. That last enemy is death. This is referred to as the time of the end.

Hades lasts as long as death is in this world. Jesus still has the keys to both death and Hades. If having the keys of death indicates authority over death, it means the same thing regarding Hades. Hades still exists as the place of departed spirits, the underworld, and will not be emptied until the second coming of Christ when both death and Hades come to an end.

The word Paradise comes from the Persian language and means a pleasure garden, grove, park, lush and well watered where one could rest, eat of the fruit trees and be refreshed. It was used to describe the parks and gardens of the Persian rulers and nobility. The LXX uses Paradise to refer to the garden of Eden, Genesis 2:8,15. In Genesis 13:10, the Jordan valley where Sodom and Gomorrah were located became the "paradise of God" because the area was lush and well watered. It also is found in Joel 2:3, Ezekiel 31:8-9 and other passages.

Thayer, p. 480 says of Paradise, after noting the basic definitions, "that part of Hades which was thought by the later Jews to be the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection."

Revelation 2:7 says, "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." Revelation 22 places the tree of life where God's throne is located. These passages turn attention back to the garden of Eden, which could also be described as a Paradise.

In II Corinthians 12, Paul describes an experience he had. He didn't know exactly what happened. It seemed quite real but was obviously a vision. In this, he was caught up into the third heaven, into Paradise. The third heaven would identify the abode of God and is thus referred to as Paradise. It is thus in keeping with the passages in Revelation, using Paradise to refer to heaven.

In Luke 23:42, one of the men crucified with Jesus said, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Jesus replied to this, saying, "verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." This is translated and punctuated correctly. Some, trying to escape the consequences of what Jesus says here, change the punctuation and word order. They place the comma after the word "Today." Thus they have it read, "verily I say unto thee Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise." By this reasoning, they shift the time the thief would be with Jesus in Paradise to an indefinite time. However, that makes an awkward and redundant statement. Certainly it was "today," that very moment, that Jesus said it; when else would He be saying it?

"Today" is the emphasis here. By crucifixion, one might linger in torture for several days. Jesus knew that He, Himself, would die that day and also knew the thief would die that day as well. "Today" was spoken to comfort the thief, who would then know that his suffering would soon be over and in addition, he would be with Jesus in Paradise. The thief asked only to be remembered when Jesus would come in His kingdom. Just what the thief thought the kingdom meant, we are not told. Apparently, the thief was thinking of something far distant. Jesus brings things back to that very day, not something far distant. It is correctly translated and punctuated, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." In John 20:17, Jesus told Mary,

"Touch me not for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God."

Mary was holding on to Him. What Jesus was saying was quit hanging on to me; go tell my brethren about me. Contrary to what commentators, such as Vine, have to say, Jesus did not go to heaven when He died on the cross. Jesus was specific: "I am not yet ascended unto the Father." He didn't ascend until a few days before Pentecost. Where was He for the time between death and the resurrection? Well, He told the thief that they would be together in Paradise that very day.

Webster's English Dictionary says of Elysium that it referred to the happy place of the souls of departed good people, comparable to Paradise. The Greek idea of Hades contained the Elysian Fields as a place of rest, comfort and peace as in a pleasure garden. The word Paradise ideally describes the Elysian Fields of the Greeks. The latter Jewish belief called Paradise (Elysian Fields), the bosom of Abraham, which Jesus refers to in Luke 16 as the place the poor Lazarus went at death. When Jesus used such terms as "bosom of Abraham," and Hades as being a place of torment for the wicked, the Jews understood what He was saying.

Jesus promised the thief on the cross that they would be together, that day, in Paradise. This is also why the prophecy concerning Jesus was that "thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption," Acts 2:27. Verses 31-32 give the fulfillment of the prophecy, "he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." When Jesus died, the spirit went into the Paradise part of the realm of departed spirits, Hades. That Divine spirit returned from Hades to rejoin the body of Jesus of Nazareth in the resurrection.

An objection is made to this, insisting that the quotation in Acts 2:27,31 is a Hebrew parallelism which means that the second line is exactly parallel to the first, saying the same thing in different words. Thus, it is said, Hades means nothing more than the grave where the body saw no corruption; there is no such place as a Hadean realm of departed spirits where the Spirit that was in Jesus went at death.

In reply, I point out that parallelism in Hebrew poetry only refers to a poetic device. Synonymous equality of meaning is not inherent in that poetic device. There are four different types of Hebrew parallelism in poetry. One of these types is called *Antithetic Parellelism* where the second line is contrasted with the first. Another type is Synthetic or Constructive Parallelism, which refers only to similarity in form and has nothing to do with word for word equivalence. If we grant Hebrew parallelism in Acts 2:27,31, just which type are we going to insist applies there?

There is no doubt that when Jesus died on the cross, the Spirit left the body. We know that. We also know that the spiritless body was placed in a tomb. Where did the Spirit go? Well, it didn't go to heaven, as we have already seen. Wherever it was, it was a Paradise and the grave can hardly be called a Paradise. Wherever it was, the thief on the cross was with Him, but the body of the thief was not buried with Jesus. Let's look again at Acts 2:31, "neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption." The "he" in the first sentence refers to the spirit. The word "his" in the second sentence also refers to the spirit, but uses the possessive pronoun only to identify whose flesh is under discussion. We may as well word it, as it is actually saying, "He was not left unto Hades, nor did His body see corruption." Notice the "neither/nor" construction. On the one hand His Spirit was not detained in Hades and on the other His body did not corrupt during the time in the tomb. This is similarity in form and subject, but not an exact word for word parallel. It is as much a contrast as a similarity.

Ephesians 4:9-10 says, "Now this, he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." This phrase, "lower parts of the earth," means more than the tomb. Psalm 63:9 says, "But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth." We have already seen in the Lexicons that Hades is said to be in the depths of the earth; the under world. The passage says that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth before He ascended into heaven. He didn't descend into the tomb but rather His body was "laid in a tomb." He did descend into Hades, the lower parts of the earth, the underworld, or however we might describe it.

Romans 10:6-7 says, "But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down): or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." Paul's argument is based on Deuteronomy 30:12-14, though he changes Deuteronomy to fit the current point. Romans 10 refers to the same events of Ephesians 4. The word "descend" is the same as in Ephesians 4:9-10. Just as Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, anyone else would have to descend into the abyss in order to be in the same place Jesus went. The word "abyss" is from *abussos* and refers to something bottomless, the abode of the dead but not the grave, the underworld; Hades. See Bauer, p. 2, Vine, p. 144. In Luke 8:31, the demons argue with Jesus: "And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss." These were spirits, bodiless spirits, that did not want to be consigned to the abyss. Wherever it was that these demons did not want to go, it was a place for spirits, not bodies.

These demonic spirits had already been living in the tombs. Luke 8:27 says,

"And when he was come forth upon the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had demons; and for a long time he had worn no clothes, and abode not in any house, but in the tombs."

These evil spirits controlled the man and caused him to live in the tombs. Obviously, the tombs were preferred by the demons seeing they drove the man to inhabit them. Why would they plead with Jesus not to send them back to the tombs if they had preferred being there? The word abyss could not refer to tombs or graves and so must mean some other place. That other place is Hades.

So, the one who ascended into heaven first descended into the lower parts of the earth, the abyss, the underworld, Hades. The spirit came out of the underworld, rejoined the body and was thus resurrected.

Matthew 16:18 says, “upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Hades did not hold Jesus, He came out of Hades and was resurrected. This is explained in verse 21,

“From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.”

Wherever Jesus went when He died on the cross, He was conscious. In John 2:18-21, Jesus said that if they “destroy this temple, I will raise it up.” The temple of which He spoke was “the temple of His body.” Notice the “I” as the one who will raise up His own body. There is a clear distinction between His spirit and His body. He neither ceased to exist at death nor did He become unconscious.

Tartarus was the subterranean region that was considered by the Greeks to be the abode of wicked dead in Hades. It is found only in a verb form in the N.T., II Peter 2:4 where the word “hell” is an incorrect translation for our modern day. The passage reads,

“For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment...”

“Cast them down to hell” is an aorist active participle, meaning the act of casting and more correctly worded “having cast them down.” “Committed” is an aorist active indicative verb and refers to the act of being committed. The statement is then, “having cast them down to hell, committed them to pits of darkness.” On the other hand, “reserved” is a present passive participle which refers to action that is still going on, they remain in Tartarus until the time of judgment. This same subject is also described in Jude 6, “And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

There can be no doubt that a “holding place” is being described here. They are to be held there unto the judgment of the great day. The scene of that judgment includes the statement in Matthew 25:41,

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.”

This is the second death, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, Revelation 20:10-14. I know of no reason to suppose that these beings were any other than what they are said to be, spirit beings called “angels.” The devil, his angels, death and Hades will be cast into the eternal fire at the same time, following the judgment.

The place the angels who sinned were held was tartarus, the place of departed evil spirits, but not the place of eternal torment, the second death. Much the same language is used in II Peter 2:9 as in verse 4 and in Jude 6. Peter says, “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.” This is obviously a temporary place and circumstance. The unrighteous are in this particular place only until the day of judgment. Then things will change. Notice also that the unrighteous, in this temporary circumstance, are under punishment. This is beginning to sound more and more like the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, isn't it?

It is objected that all this would mean that the judgment would take place at death rather than after the resurrection, because some are under punishment and others are at rest when they die. The fact is, God already knows where a person is going when he dies. The day of Judgment is a time of sentencing. The Day of Judgment does not mean that God won't know a person's fate until that day when He will decide. Charges are brought against us at judgment and we will give an accounting for what we have done, but the end is certain.

John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." The word "believeth" in both places here is the same form of *pisteuo*, a present participle. It refers to durative, continued believing, faithfulness, not just a momentary acceptance of Jesus. The word "judged," a perfect participle from *krino* in both places, refers to being condemned as a result of a judgment. This is why the King James translates it, "he that believeth not is condemned already." God already knows at death just who is saved or lost.

It is expressed in Revelation 20:15, "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." Names are already entered in that book. Paul calls the names of some of them in Philippians 4:3 and says their "names are in the book of life." Answering the question of the disciples concerning the time of His second coming, Matthew 24:36-44, Jesus says that at that time, two men will be in the field, one is taken and one is left, two women will be grinding at the mill, one is taken and one left. This refers to the same circumstances as I Thessalonians 4:13-18; those Christians who are still alive at the second coming will be caught up into the air to be with the Lord. The fact that the man in the field and the woman at the mill are "taken," identifies them as Christians. The fact is that at the resurrection and before the judgment, the bodies of the righteous are changed for eternal life. God knows who the righteous are before judgment.

A sharp separation of mankind will be made immediately at the second coming. In the judgment scene in Matthew 25, Jesus knew who the sheep and goats were when He divided them. He states reasons why each is to be saved or lost, after they are divided. He then sentences them to eternal life or eternal condemnation. If God knows at the resurrection who is saved or lost, He surely must know who is saved or lost at death. Judgment day is sentencing day.

Two passages in I Thessalonians are usually pointed to as evidence that the righteous go directly to heaven at death. I Thessalonians 4:13 says that Jesus will return "with all his saints," and 4:14 says that those who are fallen asleep will "God bring with him" when Jesus returns. So, it is said that they would have to be in heaven before the second coming for these statements to be true. I don't believe so. Matthew 24:27 says of the visibility of His second coming, "For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man." He said that to counter the idea that His coming would be secretive. Revelation 1:7 says that He will come with the clouds and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him. We don't know how all will see Him when He comes on the clouds, given the shape and population of the world. I figure He will work that out in His own wisdom and power. We have no idea exactly where the intermediate state is, how the spirits will be brought forth, or how the resurrection will be accomplished. Jesus can take the spirits out of their intermediate state before He appears to those who are alive on earth at His second coming or any other way He decides to do it.

We have seen enough evidence to show that there is an intermediate state and that man does not go directly to his eternal reward until after the events of the end time have occurred. Whatever torment the wicked experience between death and the resurrection cannot be compared with what they will experience in Hell, II Thessalonians 1:6-10. Whatever rest the righteous experience between death and the resurrection cannot be compared with the powerful glory of eternal life.