

(1) Is there such a thing, or is death a cessation of existence, an eternal sleep, a total absorption into a larger or more ultimate reality, or a simple dissolution into our constituent physical elements?

(2) If there is such a thing as an Intermediate State, does it consist in a cessation of existence until a person is re-created at the resurrection; or in a state of absolute unconsciousness until the last trumpet; or in a slumber of the soul until the Day of Judgment; or in the post-mortem continuance, in a conscious disembodied state, of the numerically same person who lived in an ante-mortem state?

(3) If we assert a conscious disembodied state of persons between death and the resurrection, does this concept make logical sense, is it epistemologically verifiable (both in principle and in fact), and can it be given ontological status?

(4) Do the Scriptures say anything about such an Intermediate State, and if so, what?

Let us divide our treatment of this subject into two unequal headings: A Consideration of the Scriptural Data, and Some Intriguing Questions about the Intermediate State, questions concerning which Scripture gives us little or no information.

### **A Consideration of the Scriptural Data**

Let us treat this concern under two sub-heads: Scriptural data regarding the Intermediate State in general, and Scriptural data regarding the possibility of a dispensationally-related change in the Intermediate State.

#### *The Intermediate State in General*

There are five words in the original languages of Scripture which would appear to have the most direct bearing on the Intermediate State. Let us consider the usage of each of these words.

*Sheol*. The first of these words is the Hebrew word *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל). It is used 65 times in the Old Testament. The Authorized or King James Version translates it as follows: 31 times as "grave," 31 times as "hell," and 3 times as "pit." *Sheol* appears to have three areas of meaning, when